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IMAGETIC ASPECTS
OF
CONTEMPORARY
ENGLISH POETRY

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Presented to
Dr. Vidya Niwas Mishra
as a token of high personal regard.

(J. Sharma)
31.10.86

**LINGUISTIC ASPECTS
OF
CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH POETRY**

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Preface

Several strands of thought have converged in the following attempt to explain the mode of existence and effect of a contemporary poem from a broad linguistic base. My original intention was to present a comprehensive model which could be employed in studying any poem, but finally I decided to begin with a modest project, leaving the more ambitious plan for a future date. Contemporary poetry seemed to offer suitable material, since its context of situation—both primary and secondary—can be meaningfully presented to the modern reader with an immediate appeal.

In my preliminary discussion, I have utilized some insights of the literary critic with a view to clarifying some theoretical points and presenting the 'context' in a suitable form. Certain formulations of the literary theoretician can be shown to have relevance to a linguistic study of poetry.

A major portion of this work is devoted to the discussion of contemporary English poetry through the grammatical and semantic analysis of some selected poems. It has an interpretative orientation. I have risked going beyond description and have endeavoured to spell out content from form, response from stimulus, and effect from cause. This need not be necessarily unscientific, although at the present stage of their development nearly all empirical sciences admit a possibility of divergent findings. More and more linguists now accept the view that the science of language cannot exclude meaning from its purview, and that it is sometimes futile to analyse the structure of expression as an autonomous domain. If a real breakthrough is to be made, linguists (as scientists) cannot abandon the task of predicting the modification of behaviour caused by a verbal communication.

The subtle effect of a poem arises from a complex linguistic design; hence the need for a detailed linguistic analysis. A fairly detailed linguistic analysis has been offered for Philip

Larkin's poem, "Wants". I have also given what may be called the "linguistic pictures" of the poem from different angles. It is the linguistic organisation represented by these pictures which accounts for the psychological impact the poem has on the reader. The gradual unfolding of the theme comes from the dynamic distribution of linguistic units of different kinds; statistical counting in the course of reading is of little use. But once we have completed our reading, we reflect to estimate its net impact. Then, numerical ratios and proportions begin to assume significance. On the basis of these we can decide such matters as prolixity, density, terseness, gravity, lightness, vacuity—concepts often intuitively applied by the literary critic. By computing percentages of different types, e.g., content words, nouns, complex sentences, and comparing them with those found in common English, we can arrive at important results regarding the figure a poem makes on our psyche. Here a word of caution : the statistical device used must be extremely sensitive.

On the basis of rough mental calculations along the above lines, it can be suggested (subject to specific formulation after detailed investigation) that the 'lightness' of popular songs comes from a liberal use of 'empty words' and repetition (apart from meter and rhythm). The condensation effect in W. H. Auden's poetry is due to the incorporation of theoretical background—Freud, Marx, Kierkegaard—into the semantic scheme of a poem, in T. S. Eliot, chiefly due to allusions (to be linguistically described) and dropping of discursal links, in G. M. Hopkins due to the use of coined compounds.

This book, as a whole, aims at providing a suitable model for the analysis and interpretation of contemporary poetry along with a general description of its favoured linguistic manipulations. With necessary extensions and minor adjustments, it can be applied to the study of any short poem.

As an after thought, I have added two appendices. They contain slightly modified and expanded versions of two papers

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published elsewhere, but the material in them is vitally related to the main theme of the book : the first attempts a linguistic treatment of metaphor, representing my later views on the subject and the second considers with one more example of detailed analysis, the feasibility of teaching a poem in accordance with the model presented. In Appendix II, there is some unavoidable repetition of what has been stated in the main work.

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Dietrich Nehls, who has given me constant encouragement and valuable advice. His suggestions concerning the structuring of the work have been quite helpful. My thanks are also due to S. K. Singh, who assisted me during the preparation of this work; to Jeffrey and Doris Timm, whose careful reading of the manuscript helped me avoid many an awkward expression, and to Shashi Talwar and Surendra Nath Choudhury for pointing out several typographical errors. Finally thanks are due to Divine Printers, who have done a good job within a short time.

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Varanasi
June 1985.

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CHAPTER I

POEM, LANGUAGE, AND
THE CONTEMPORARY POET

Description and Interpretation

Linguists have evinced considerable interest during the past few decades in the structure of poetic language. Their chief endeavour has gone into the description of what may be called the 'poetic register'.¹ S. R. Levin, taking his cue from Roman Jakobson, has considered 'couplings' as characteristic structures of poetry.² His discussion on the subject is quite discriminating and seems to contain the seeds of a general theory of poetic communication. A. A. Hill,³ M. A. K. Halliday,⁴ and J. McH. Sinclair⁵ have offered isolated but competent analyses of poems with a view to describing their linguistic structure and cohesion. However, J. P. Thorne's suggestion, favoured by some other linguists, that poetry should be treated as a separate language "or a different dialect from standard English"⁶ appears to me both unpromising and inaccurate. Poetry in a broad sense is always of a language and cannot have an autonomous grammar of its own. Its methods change from time to time, genre to genre, and even poet to poet; it exploits the possibilities offered by the grammar of the language instead of using an altogether new grammar. The expression, "he danced his did" is only comprehensible in the light of 'conversion' in English grammar as in the sentence *Let's go for a swim*; but the former expression is more daring. When a language is undergoing a dramatic structural change it offers a rich hoard of new possibilities, and sensitive poets begin to exploit them. With the loss of inflexions in Middle English, nouns and verbs like 'sleep' and 'love' fell together pointing the way to conversion as a source of new words. Shakespeare pounced on this

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potentiality, using 'beggar' and 'boy' as verbs with a remarkable effect.

The work I have mentioned so far is devoted almost exclusively to a study of structure including cohesion. It does not attempt to relate grammatical means to meaning and effect, presumably for fear of 'going unscientific'. There is, probably, no objective method to validate the interpretation of linguistic manipulations in poetry in terms of psychological impact. G. N. Leech's *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, however, is not free from an interpretative bias; he views the linguistic and critical aspects of literary studies as complementary. He writes in the Preface: "what I hope will emerge from these pages, in outline is a general scheme for the discussion of the language of literary texts, and a framework of reference on linguistic matters for anyone interested in the interpretation of poetry".⁷ Earlier still, Leech had presented a linguistic description of Dylan Thomas's "This Bread I Break" in terms of cohesion, foregrounding, and cohesion of foregrounding, along with "only one possible level of interpretation, and a very partial one at that".⁸

Language (including poetic language) is a kind of stimulus and the linguistic study of a poem cannot be regarded as complete without exploring the full meaning (including experience) of linguistic signals, since by definition, stimulus implies a certain effect. A purely descriptive study, however, has its own cognitive value and cannot (as is supposed by some literary critics) be dismissed as pointless. At the same time the interpretative aspect of linguistic study is equally important and should be pursued further.

Developing a Framework

My object in this chapter is to develop a set of formulae which may account for the making and birth of a contemporary poem. The theory in its general form will be applicable to any poem, but it provides no tool for the complete interpretation of a poem written in the past or composed against

the background of a 'system'. The model⁹ is also intended to mediate between the author and the reader, that is, to explain the creative effort of the poet and the aesthetic experience of the reader by the same set of postulates. It has a linguistic orientation because I have assumed that a poem is basically a piece of language, and it is chiefly by linguistic manipulations, based on the possibilities of linguistic structure, that the poet builds a 'beautiful' state of the mind. But, at the same time, I also contend that a proper understanding of poetry cannot be complete without relevant historical and biographical information. Before presenting a detailed analysis and interpretation of some selected poems, I have given a general discussion of the 'context of situation' for contemporary poetry and the dynamic logico-semantic plan of poems.

Polarity of Literary Criticism

Before the model is presented, it is necessary to clarify some general and particular issues which have an important bearing on our subject. They are related to the polarity of literary criticism¹⁰, popular versus elitist approach to poetry, the nature of a poem, and the distinctive tenor of contemporary verse with my reasons for choosing it.

Much literary criticism of the past directed towards the understanding of poetry was centred around either the poet or the reader. The poet-oriented approach emphasized the need to know in detail the life and circumstances of the man who composed the poem. This resulted in a good deal of discussion around the poem, and gave rise to much information, but little aesthetic experience, in the mind of the reader. This also led to the image of the poet as a fully integrated and logically consistent personality with a philosophy of life and set responses to beauty. Consequently, variability of mood and changes in approach were often overlooked, if not 'disallowed', and every poem by an author was understood in the light of his image built by critics. Some critics have emphasized the need to study the process of 'making'. They have claimed that the task of the critic is to retrace the footsteps of the poet, to

recapture for the reader the original mood of the writer. This task requires an exercise of poetic imagination and demands creative talent in every genuine critic; a good critic must also be a poet himself. This tends to place the art of literary interpretation beyond the reach of many professed critics, not to speak of the common reader.

On the other hand, I. A. Richards and those who draw their inspiration from his theories give primary importance to the reader's reaction to a poem. A poem is treated as a kind of stimulus to which the reader is expected to make a satisfactory response.¹¹ This implies two things : a close study of the text, and a psychological consideration of the effect on the reader. The critic engages himself in considering the meaning of the poetic language from a general psychological perspective and studies the reader's adjustment to the poem. This approach leaves out one aspect of the process—the poet—and may lead to interpretations far removed from the original intentions of the 'maker'. The original aesthetic mood of the poet resulted from a particular personal and socio-cultural interaction which is reflected in the poem. A reader can never hope to gain the full intended impact merely by paying close attention to the text unless he limits himself to contemporary and familiar authors, or gains knowledge of the context by study. Even a close linguistic study strictly confined to the text will not be adequate. Recognising the value of literary scholarship, Enkvist makes a pertinent point : "Only the literary scholar can tell us all that is implied in Milton's making Comus the son of Circe by Bacchus. The full implications of Comus' sinister ancestry do not emerge from a linguistic analysis of the whole corpus of English literature. Yet they must be understood for a proper appreciation of Milton's poem".¹² In extreme cases, this method may lead to serious errors of interpretation. Judged from the contemporary reader's perspective, a daily tool of the ancient man may appear to be an object of beauty, or an utterance intended to arouse pathos may be mistaken for an example of humour.

Linguistic Criticism of the Polar Theories

The main problem with these two approaches, with a number of intergradations, is that they are inadequate and incomplete; they do not take account of all the essential factors involved. A poem must be treated as a special type of communicative act whereby the poet attempts to transmit a unique experience to others. Although the elements of self-expression and release always accompany poetic performance, no poem is composed without a receiving target in mind. We need not be misled by the assertion of the Hindi poet Tulsidas who claimed that he wrote the Ram Charit Manas for self-satisfaction, since the very fact that he chose the language of the masses implies a desire to communicate, apart from the other clues found in the work itself. Similarly, G. M. Hopkins, who was imbued with the spirit of self-surrender and regarded his poetry as a way of worship, also entertained a hope for the publication of his verse and expressed it in a letter to Bridges. There is nothing unnatural or ignoble in this. Indeed the entire edifice of human culture is based on an innate urge to share our experience with others; it is the first condition of collaboration and cooperation.

The sharing of poetic experience through the medium of language involves the writer, the hearer or reader, and the linguistic code with its systems of sound, grammar, and meaning. The poet's message is a difficult one. He must consciously or unconsciously struggle with language in order to encode the content of his aesthetic experience, which is far more intractable than ordinary cognitive matter.¹³ The reader is expected to decode the message correctly if he is interested in its true import. But language is far more complex than a simple deliberately constructed code. In the latter case, encoding and decoding are more or less mechanical; the code itself has little creative possibility and no range beyond its specific purpose. Language, by contrast, is a living medium organically related to the communicants; it lives and grows and changes with us, it pulsates with our innermost feelings,

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emotions and moods, ideas, thoughts and meditations, dreams, reveries and introspections. It is both social and personal, making for a fine correspondence between individual and community, speaker and hearer. It is both a vehicle and a hindrance; it facilitates and blocks expression, it involves ease as well as struggle. The total meaning (including feeling, mood, and ideas) which a linguistic symbol has for a particular individual, never completely coincides with that of any other individual in the community, but in ordinary social intercourse, difficulties in communication are seldom felt because the central area of meaning (central for general practical purposes) is commonly shared by all the users, although, even in conversation, we occasionally find ourselves struggling with words.

Poetic communication is of a special kind.¹⁴ The experience communicated is unique and uncommon—I find no contradiction in saying that truly universal experience is also unique and uncommon inasmuch as it clearly differs from conventionally shared experience. It is deeply rooted in the personality of the author both as a unique consciousness and as a member of the society. The poet must therefore wrestle with the medium, manipulating it and forcing it to get his message across; it is by his peculiar handling of the code that he is able to transmit his experience. The totality of meaning present in his mind is at considerable variance with that of the reader, and the latter must endeavour to know both the code and the encoder in order to gain access to the poet's meaning.

For these reasons, a satisfactory model for interpretation must take into account all the three factors : encoder, code, and decoder. The totality of the situation includes the poet, the poem, and the reader. It is necessary to consider the relation between poet and reader in time and space, and to know relevant facts about the writer and his milieu. The language of the poem is certainly of crucial importance; it contains information about the man who composed it, and it is the chief source of the aesthetic enjoyment. "In considering the

language of poetry" writes Mrs. Nowotny "it is prudent to begin with what is 'there' in the poem—'there' in the sense that it can be described and referred to as unarguably given by the words".¹⁵

Common Versus Select Readership

Another question of importance is whether poetry is to be addressed to the general mass of readers or to a select few. No doubt, the full enjoyment of a work of art demands varying degrees of effort on the part of spectator or reader, but this is quite different from the specialist demand which the common reader can only satisfy by making literature his main occupation. The outstanding figures in literature from Homer down to Shakespeare and Dickens evidently offered their works to the general public who responded enthusiastically, although some understood them better than others. Great writers of literature have generally directed their productions towards the society as a whole and this has, in fact, been responsible for the universal element in their writings without which no work can survive for long. It accounts for an important modality in the language used. There has certainly been a widespread belief that literature is a means of mass education in higher human values and in fine perception. According to a famous Sanskrit verse a man unfamiliar with literature, music, and art, is an animal devoid of tail and horn.

In the third and fourth decades of the present century, poets and critics, particularly in England and America, created a powerful impression that the society in modern times has become so materialistic that the majority of men are not interested in arts and literature, nor prepared to take pains for their sake, that the writers and lovers of literature live in isolation, and that it is no longer possible to address one's works to the general public. It was also suggested by implication that those interested in literature are the pursuers of higher values and constitute the aristocracy of the intellect. The poet is under no obligation to accommodate the majority.

which no longer cares for art and is satisfied with commercialised forms of entertainment. He should proceed in the pursuit of beauty without caring whether his work is simple or complex, easy or incomprehensible, because the minority which takes interest in literature will not mind making the necessary effort for deriving aesthetic pleasure. It was further argued that since our modern society is complex, its literature is bound to be so. These ideas were employed to elevate the work of such writers as T. S. Eliot, later Yeats and William Empson. The Auden Group, which emerged during the thirties, also composed poetry which was difficult to interpret (although the difficulty came from a different source), and the neo-Romantics of the forties with their knowledge of new psychology and 'use' of the unconscious proved to be quite complex.

The deliberate attempt to write difficult poetry must be regarded as a deviation, for it runs counter to the broad social aim of common enjoyment and makes aesthetic experience the concern of an elite: it also falsifies the original role of poetry. It needlessly involves poetry with philosophy, theology, mysticism, and science. The result is a kind of verse analogous to an over-rich dish, out of reach for the majority and a source of luxury for a constipated minority. From a communicative point of view, the common consciousness is able to touch only the fringe of what the poet wishes to convey. No one would object to a certain depth in poetry, but depth should not be drowning. As a matter of fact, among the first readers of *The Waste Land* and *Bacchus*, there was perhaps no one, except the authors themselves, learned enough to be able to catch all the allusions and references in order to puzzle out the meaning, not to mention recovering the mood. The ideal reader of these poems was really 'ideal', a ghost. Critics complained that the poems were difficult to understand even with the help of notes provided by the authors. And yet, surprisingly enough, some of the most moving lines by Eliot and Yeats, do not depend on recondite references. The following verses, for example,

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are classically simple; the symbolism needed for the mood emerges spontaneously once the context is understood :

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish ? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water.

(The Waste Land)

Hearts with one purpose alone
Through summer and winter seem
Enchanted to a stone
To trouble the living steam.

(Easter, 1916)

What is aesthetically relevant in these lines is that they succeed in building that complex mood which is the object of the poet.

What is being attacked here is not that poetry may involve complexity and may not yield its full impact immediately to the common reader, but the theory that poetry is bound to be complex and that the poet need not consider the common mass of humanity to be his audience. It is possible to suggest normative limits of deviation or manipulation in the creative use of the language system (as well as culture). In a defence of what may be called populist poetry Rosenthal has stated : "Poets are the verbal antennae of a people. The awareness they distil and convert into the dynamics of language is somehow present in the populace at large. We neglect it at our peril".¹⁶ The communication chain is bound to snap at a certain point of incomprehensibility, beyond which the poet ceases to serve as the antenna of the speech community, and may be said to be using a purely personal code. It would be interesting to consider this point in the perspective of the work of Korzybski¹⁷ and Hayakawa¹⁸.

I also suspect the cult of difficulty has yet another source. The early part of the present century saw the rise of a new

kind of worker, the specialist. Specialization is supposed to command much respect in the field of knowledge; every intellectual would secretly like to be called a specialist. Some poets, who were convinced that no one was interested in poetry, probably thought that they could at least attract a minority by resorting to what may be broadly called specialist poetry. But this kind of infection, though justifiable in literary criticism, is self-defeating in poetry and runs counter to the communication principle.

The Nature of a Poem

In considering the nature of a poem I am chiefly concerned with its dynamic structure and its distinction from a painting or a statue. In painting and sculpture, we do not have to watch the artist at work in order to see how he handles his tools and material until the finished work appears; we do not have to reconstruct the process in our mind. We certainly gain the full impact only by looking at the completed piece attentively and for some length of time, but the making is not important. In contrast, a poem takes place as an event in time; its essence is in the making, or growing, where, as some poets have admitted, the 'made' led the maker; the poem was born in spite of the poet. "The overriding property of texts is linearity: speech occurs linearly in time, and writing, imitating speech, occurs linearly in space".¹⁹ The pattern emerges, the mood builds up as you read the poem. Here you cannot see (strictly speaking) the tree and the moon, the nose and the leg, at the same instant; you must first follow the sequence of words as they roll out one after another and modify and gradually give shape to the experience. To use a crude image, a poem is like a picture turned on a roller. A poem has dynamic construction in this sense; we have to watch the deft touches which the poet gives his material from beginning to end. It is only after we have seen the last line, that we can contemplate the pattern and symmetry which is the source of deeper satisfaction. It is this distinctive fact about the growth of a poem which should be kept in mind when interpreting a poem.

The poet C. Day Lewis explains the poetic process after the poet has 'caught' a subject : "At this early stage, the poet has begun to build a house with only one small part of the blueprint available to him, or while he is still drawing the blueprint, or with many alternative blueprints at his disposal. If he has to work in this hand-to-mouth way, it is because conception and form are for him inseparable, because a poem is an organic growth in which the theme only reveals itself through the growing pattern".²⁰ Specific details concerning this aspect of poetry will be discussed later.

Contemporary English Poetry : The Context of Situation

Earlier I stated that for a comprehensive interpretative model we must take the writer, the poem, and the reader into account. For the writer I have selected the contemporary poet in order to keep the model simple. It is not necessary to dwell on the life and times of the poet and the kind of language he uses, for we all share a scientific-industrial culture with our writers and are subject to the same kind of hopes and fears. Both poets and readers are familiar with the contemporary form of the language, but the former achieve their results by using it as their base. This enables us to leave out the historical aspect in our interpretative framework. We cannot do so with poets of past generations. Many times, critics have missed the real intent of a poem written in the past because of their failure to comprehend the grammatical and semantic structure of language used in a particular period. Word meaning and pronunciation are subject to change, and the connotation of words, which is so important in poetry, also changes. The word *wench* in Shakespeare's English is perfectly harmless and what was normal word order (again so significant in poetic language) in his day may no longer be so. The pronominal system in Elizabethan English could be manipulated to indicate a variety of social and personal relationships between characters.²¹ In order to account fully for the poetic effects in Donne's verse, it is necessary to know the kind of

English his generation used. Besides the language, it is also desirable to be acquainted with the intellectual climate of the period, the philosophical, scientific, and political ideas which prevailed at the time. We do not face this problem in studying contemporary poetry.

By contemporary poetry I mean that body of verse which came into prominence after the Second World War in Britain and America. This verse is by no means homogeneous; it comprises several kinds of writing and arose from a number of movements : The Movement, The Group, 'Confessional' Poetry, Deep Imagism, Objectivism, Projectivism and so on. But the main body of verse since the War differs markedly from the dominant trends of the earlier decades by a number of assumptions and tendencies; it is based on a changed attitude towards life and literature. Although there have been numerous innovations and experiments in technique, as evidenced by movements and anthologies, the basic view-point remains roughly the same.

The basic attitude is characterised by an 'actualistic' realisation of the world and the self. In Eliot, Yeats, and Edith Sitwell, disenchantment was still conceived with secret romanticism and a longing for the past glory. The contemporary poet, on the other hand, is completely without illusions and delusions. He has now seen too much of systems, reforms, religions, politics, and philosophies to rely on any one of them. He considers it useless to lament on "a heap of broken images" and to attempt through poetry foregrounding of the ancient values of Datta, Dayadhvam, and Damyata by which humanity can rejuvenate itself. Neither is he impressed by the political role of the poet; he has seen the fate of the individual's freedom in both capitalist and communist worlds as well as its misuse. In practical life, high principles have been continually abandoned. Freud, too, has brought no peace of mind; he has been superseded by others, and others by still others.

The world is in a state of flux and uncertainty; theories arise and fall like waves on the sea. To champion any ideology,

to assume the role of a prophet or reformer, or to dabble in philosophy, religion, mysticism, or science, is simply to expose one's naivete. The basic need is to see the world as it appears to the limited consciousness of man : fluid, disorganised, harsh, unsympathetic. We must realise our limitations. Even science is now feeling unsteady on its feet; it has given up its claim of cognizing the true reality outside human consciousness—objects and their relations. Terms like objectivity, causality, time and space are used in a 'scientifically' defined sense and not in an absolute sense.

The fundamental fact about contemporary poetry is a realization of limitations. The poet is wary of depths in matter and manner because so often they have proved presumptuous and deceptive. He is a man among men, a non-specialist among non-specialists. Like common humanity, he is puzzled and lost among ideologies and slogans; he is bewildered by the 'fastness' and vastness of the world; he is oppressed by the economic and political realities of daily living. Only occasionally does he feel otherwise; he has small insights like any ordinary individual and wishes to convey his unusual experiences in the language of the common man. He has no specialised medium; he simply achieves special effects with the help of ordinary language. His talent and training enable him to word the feeling aesthetically; that is the only thing which distinguishes him from the common man.

This 'realistic' attitude regarding the world and the poet's place in it has made a tremendous difference. So much of pre-World War II poetry appears in the new context as naively grand, romantic, and outdated along with its language. Donald Davie (b 1922), in "Remembering the Thirties", tells us how "what for them were agonies, to us/Are high-brow thrillers", and novels and poems written fifteen years ago "show/worlds more remote than Ithaca or Rome". Names like *Guernica* signify for the young poet schools and schoolmasters and games and

The Devil for a joke

Might carve his own initials on our desk,

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And still we'd miss the point, because he spoke
An idiom too dated, Audenesque.

Kingsley Amis addresses the great fathers of 'modern poetry'
thus :

...now I'm tired of being the trade-name
on boxes of assorted junk; tired of
Conscription as the mouthpiece of your brash
theories, of jiggling to your symbol-crash
Speak for yourselves, or not at all; this game
is up—your manikin has had enough.

According to a guiding principle of Philip Larkin, "every poem must be its own sole freshly-created universe and therefore have no belief in 'tradition' or a common myth-kitty or casual allusions in poems to other poems or poets..."²²

There can be no escape from common humanity, and there need not be. The high-brow esoteric view of literature is not wholesome. The poet does not have to walk on stilts. Elitist poetry smacks of fascism; the present-day generation has seen enough of the cult of class or group superiority to trust any such approach even in art and literature. Although Marxism also stands exposed in his eyes in international dealings, the contemporary poet knows that he is a victim of economic exploitation, of political jobbery and specialisation, like the majority of men. He is by nature unfit to join the ranks of the plutocracy. He cannot therefore help being one with the people since he knows that he is placed in the same position as most men; he also knows that by giving voice to his insights and moods he is resonating the most deeply felt experiences of the population.

I have confined myself to contemporary poetry for reasons implicit in the above paragraphs. To me, it seems to be grounded on a healthier and more human approach to life and art. It does not propose to deprive the millions of the satisfactions of literature, and does not allow private erudition to make the verse cloying and heavy, requiring the common reader—if he

tries to enjoy poetry—to go through twenty pages of prose before he can understand one line of verse. Above all, it admits of a simple model; it uses contemporary English and contemporary material. The readers share with the poet a common socio-cultural background or, at least, have a knowledge of the poet's situation through mass media. We do not have to provide for the historical dimension in this model or for encyclopaedic background and mythical symbolism.

In the above observations, I have tried to highlight some salient features of the 'situation' in which the act of poetic communication has taken place, including the common traits and attitudes of the participants and the state of affairs. This has seemed necessary in view of two things : first, a linguistic act is meaningful only in relation to its context of situation; second, the imagined situation within a poem is powerfully affected by the real background of the participants.

The Phonological Level

I must mention an important omission here : I have not included the phonological level in this model. This is because I wish to concentrate on grammar and semantics which account for a major part of the effect. Sound is also important but only as a vehicle and intensifier. It is desirable to choose appropriate rhythm and sound-pattern according to the theme of a poem, or, if the tune has come first, to find fit words according to the feeling initiated by the seminal sound. In contemporary verse, sound should not require much exposition. The contemporary poet, for the most part, is not in favour of experimentation in metre and versification; he does not seem to believe that every mood requires a unique phonological pattern; he has gone back to traditional metres with slight adjustments here and there. By implication, the contemporary poet does not dogmatically assert the inseparability of form and content. For him, words and grammar are the main conveyors of the experience.

The Making of a Poem

Now we can turn to the making of a poem. There are two

basic processes involved in building a poem. First, the poet starts with a broad, general area of experience and proceeds to chisel out the exact mood or 'thought' by skilful modification, specification, or concretization. Each word and grammatical structure that is added gives a new turn to the thought, and the theme emerges continuously into a clearer shape. We have to be watchful of each linguistic turn, and a sensitive response to structural modulations is what is required for a perception of the creative process.

Here the distinction drawn earlier between painting, or sculpture and poetry ought to be recalled. In a poem, it is not the final shape alone which matters, but the whole succession. In sculpture and painting it is not necessary to watch the material or medium from beginning to end; but in poetry, the poet labouring is the poem making; beauty arises from the handling of the medium—hence the importance of linguistic study.

The Use of Stylistics

Our theoretical position calls for an adjustment in the use of what has been called stylistics, or to be more precise "new stylistics"²³ (although I would prefer to call this branch of applied linguistics simply "literary linguistics", just like psycholinguistics and socio-linguistics). Linguistic study can give us insights into two related aspects of poetry: the poet's fundamental view of life—his personality, and the dynamic design of his poem. Literary stylistics as practised today apparently has failed to take the dynamic nature of both life and art into account. As far as its application to language varieties is concerned, as in the work of Halliday et al.²⁴, or David Crystal and Derek Davy²⁵, stylistic approach is perfectly valid and quite useful, but in literature, to hold that a person's use of language is as individual as his finger prints²⁶ is going too far.

In ignoring the dynamism of life and art, stylisticians seem to be committing the same error for which literary

scholars are criticized. In their concern for pigeonholing, both of them try to force authors and works into static patterns. There is no single theory to account for both "L Allegro" and "II Penseroso" from the same pen, the serious and light verse of Eliot and Auden, or change and reversal in W. B. Yeats and George Orwell. There is no doubt stylistic study can reveal the "epistemic choices"²⁷ a writer makes, but the possibility that such choices may alter as a result of growing experience must also be accommodated in a good model.

I am not pleading for a total rejection of the current approach. What is needed is the recognition of linguistic choices related to the developing theme of a poem, in addition to those induced by the realistic context of situation on the one hand, and stable traits, wherever present, of the personality of the author on the other. In a successful poem, choices of the first category are inevitable, while the latter two may or may not be present; if they are, a study of the first will offer us clues to the period style, and of the second, to the individual style (hence the epistemological stance) of the man. E. L. Epstein clearly recognizes this kind of distinction within literary style when he introduces the concepts of what he calls "the public game" and "the private game."²⁸ The kind of discriminations I have proposed will take care of both convention and idiosyncrasy, of aesthetics and personality. I have kept all these considerations in mind while discussing the poems in Chapters 2 and 3, stressing the choices of the first category which supply the key to the crystallization of the poetic experience.

The Semantic Processes : Some Examples

There is a short poem by Alan Jackson entitled "God". *God* is a word which arouses a broad mental response comprising a complex of concepts and feelings—creation, determinism, grace, punishment, fear, power and so on. The conception of God also varies widely from person to person. It requires much more space than the poem occupies to describe

the common notion of 'God'; but it is out of this material that the poet carves the mood of his poem using specification and concretization. The speaker in the poem, who is a simple Scot (a girl most probably), claims that God was no da Vinci because, although her feet are nice, her shoes are pinchy. The first sentence makes an emphatically negative statement and the second adduces a concrete example to prove the point. It must be noted here that this process does not necessarily lead to a narrowing of meaning; it is erroneous to assume that it is simply a movement from general to particular, for although some logic is involved, we are not dealing with rational ideation. What I mean is that out of a large block of experiential meaning, a figure has been cut out; an object of beauty, a poem, has been made. And the finished product is more explosive than the amorphous block out of which it has been shaped; it has more potential semantically, and radiates meaning. The result is a far richer experience than the commonplace idea about God could afford. The poet has succeeded in pinpointing the contrast between reality and imagination; but wider implications about the two kinds of creation, nature and art, the irony and contradiction of life, bring about a new awareness. Another example is Jackson's poem "Loss" in which, again, from a general concept, the poet creates a touching image of a tulip falling by the doorstep of the speaker, sparking off a profound feeling in the reader concerning the fate of beauty in a harsh 'climate'.

There has been a tendency among some contemporary poets to forbear choosing a title for a poem; only part of the first sentence is given. In such cases the semantic base may be said to be incomplete (as far as the title is concerned) and open-ended : we either wonder what the poet is going to say or have only a vague notion about it. Examples are Stevie Smith's, "My Heart Goes Out" and "As Birds are Fitted to the Boughs" by Louis Simpson. Of course, the title is more than just opening word, phrase or clause of the poem, for both the clauses in question have special contentive significance of their

own, but they cannot be said to present the base-unit in its entirety. In both poems the reader must wait for the first statement to get a clear picture of the initial thought from which the poem is to be cut out.

This conception of the general poetic process rests on a firm empirical foundation, for it assumes that our reading of a poem starts with a piece of conventional semantic material plus personal over- and under-tones, the core consisting of the meanings as given by a dictionary. It is with this material that our descent into the poem begins, and it is in relation to it that the form of the poem has a meaning. This base itself may not continue to be relevant : if the poem follows a straight course then some part of the base material concretised and circumscribed is the final fruit, but in a complex poem, it may be used up partly or entirely, giving rise to something new.

In W. B. Yeats's "Second Coming", the process of specialization is discernible. Excluding the allusions and references, which lie outside the scope of our model, we observe that the poem starts with the already specialised meaning of the coming of Christ on the Judgement Day, including conventionally aroused sentiments and feelings. This idea is concretised into a novel mood and we are shown :

A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.

The experience is capped with a terrible insight into the future of mankind.

The word *Catastrophe* calls up the ideas of misfortune, mishap or failure with attendant feelings of misery and fear. Edwin Brock, in a poem, hews at this idea :

I destroyed the first cat we had :
crammed her into a basket one spring-wet
day and walked angrily to the vet. 'Do away

(20)

with her' I said. 'For a year we've tried
to train her, and the flat is full of fishbones
and catshit.

It may be mentioned here that there are several ways in which specification and concretisation are achieved. The use of the first person singular is one of them; another, to embody the idea or feeling in a situation comprising persons and things. Subjectivisation was a favourite method of the 19th Century Romantic poets. This stylistic feature is not merely a matter of random choice, but is related to the philosophy of literature held by those poets. When we read the title "The Daffodils" a vague picture of a certain kind of flowers emerges from memory with a setting determined by the individual experience of the reader and the whole world to watch it. In the first lines, the picture is personalised and localised :

I wander'd lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden daffodils

The importance of the experiencing poet is again and again brought to focus :

I gazed — and gazed — but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought.

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills
And dances with the daffodils.

We are left in no doubt that the "I" in the poem is Wordsworth himself and not a persona.

Going back to Brock's poem, the first stanza deals with the death of a succession of cats from various causes. The use of verbs, adjectives and adverbs by an implied process of exclusion (crammed, for example, excludes *put*, *placed*,

laid, etc.) helps the poet etch out a mood of impatience and the style points to an attitude of unsentimental objectivity. The reader is filled with disgust at the death of so many cats and the way they died, but he wonders whether it is not too much to call the sad experience a catastrophe.

In the second stanza, the reader's doubt is confirmed; the dying of the cats is not a catastrophe, but it is symbolic of something deeper that it can generate; it is the psychological attitude which one may develop towards others that is dangerous.

One could easily
acquire a taste for this kind of living.
I watch the way I treat my children, carefully.

It should not be thought that the poet has added something new to the initial idea. Rather, I would prefer to suggest that he has drawn into focus one possibility (or rather actualised it) of the several present in the meaning of the word catastrophe. After all, the accent is laid on a way of living which may spell disaster for man: the introduction of the word Eichmann is quite significant. Thus from our point of view the poem is slightly complex: there is a narrowing and defining of experience followed by a broadening at a deeper level, but all within the initial scope.

In "5 Ways to Kill a Man" Brock proceeds to define each way. There is specifying and concretisation but apparently no narrowing of the semantic region covered by the title itself. The first four ways are crucifixion, medieval war, First World War, and modern war. The fifth way is distinguished by novelty:

These are, as I began, cumbersome ways
to kill a man. Simpler, direct, and much more neat
is to see that he is living somewhere in the middle
of the twentieth century, and leave him there.

After we have finished the poem, we realise that the basic

motive of the poet is not simply to describe five kinds of killing. His aim is actually to define the mood of death-in-life which his contemporaries often feel — it is a strange type of feeling for which ordinary language has no word, and which we attempt to signify by using oxymoron or paradox. Thus the last stanza forms the central point of the poetic experience, but at the same time the requisite mood will fail to emerge if the poem is shorn of the earlier stanzas. It will not do merely to say :

“The best way to kill a man is to see that he
is living somewhere in the middle of the
twentieth century, and leave him there.”

The earlier forms of death are given for defining by contrast and for historical perspective.

I have outlined what seems to me to be the main process in the making of a poem from both the reader's and the writer's point of view. It need not be objected that the poet may and sometimes does give the title to a poem after composing it, for this is only partly true. On poets' own testimony, a poem takes its birth in a variety of ways : an idea, or feeling may come first, insisting on embodiment in words; a tune sometimes haunts the poet until it is realised in words; the first, middle, or last line may leap up into the poet's mind, or a topic may suggest itself in the beginning. More important, most poems appear in print with a title and most poets would not release a poem to the reader until after choosing the title. Even where the title is avoided by the writer and the poem is headed by a Roman or Arabic number, it has a stylistic significance. Number-title of a poem means either of the two things : it is to be viewed as a part of a broader group of poems closely or loosely inter-connected by a single theme, pattern or technique, or the poet feels that if he gives the title he will create a bias in the mind of the reader.

What we are concerned with is the beginning of our experience. Our experience in most cases starts with the title : as

suggested earlier, the title calls up certain ideas and feelings which are deftly cut into a pattern by a process of exclusion. Where the title is not given, we naturally begin our study with the first clause or sentence, which initiates the poem. Proceeding from this empirical basis, I have described in outline the main process of a poem. However, the poet may follow the opposite process. The opposite process consists in taking a specific concept and constructing the poem either by adding new elements or by broadening the given one.

The additive process can be seen in Ted Hughes' poem "View of a Pig." This title evokes the idea of a pig as seen by someone. It does not include the word *dead* which is so important in the poem. However, it is supplied in the first line. So we can say that we start off with the idea how the sight of a dead pig affects the poet. In the course of the first six stanzas, the picture of a heavy beast which is too dead to arouse feelings of remorse, amusement, pity, or pathos is drawn. Statement upon statement is made until the deadness of the pig becomes a reality so utterly unique that it has nothing in common with its past aliveness or with the deadness of a human being. The 'view' is so deeply explored that the reader is on the verge of a profound mystical mood : the carcass assumes a mysterious quality.

Stanza seven makes an addition :

Once I ran at a fair in the noise
To catch a greased piglet
That was faster and nimbler than a cat,
Its squeal was the rending of metal.

From death, the poet suddenly turns to life; he recalls the electric energy of a piglet and its sharp energetic squeal. 'Too-aliveness' is placed beside 'too-deadness'. The addition is surely meaningful, for it presents a sudden contrast. Stanza 8 is also an addition making a generalisation of what the poet had once experienced :

Pigs must have hot blood, they feel like ovens.

- Their bite is worse than a horse's —
- They chop a half-moon clean out.
- They eat cinders, dead cats.

From the title we had expected verses about a certain pig. We know from the beginning lines that the poet has a particular pig in mind. In the eighth stanza, however, the poet introduces the species — *pigs* — and describes some of its characteristics. In the last stanza the poet returns to the dead pig and what they were going to do with it.

The inset two stanzas are highly significant; they sharpen our feeling of the deadness of the pig by presenting a vivid contrast. Although additions to the initial thought, they are not extraneous to the design of the poem. Since the carcass is the present reality, the poet cannot stray longer and so he returns to the original theme, enabling the reader to receive a keener, deeper impact.

Here I must suggest another possibility which gives an equally satisfactory result. If we take the title strictly, it has a broader scope than the first six stanzas cover; the meaning is not confined to the sight of a dead pig. The deadness of the pig as it impacts on the consciousness of the poet is the theme of the poem. If we look at it in this way, then we have to conclude that there has been a specification made by excluding liveness and concretising deadness. This would affect the structural status of the two penultimate stanzas, which will be seen as less of an addition under this interpretation.

Poets decide poem-titles after due consideration, and I am inclined to read a special meaning into the omission of the word *dead* in the title. The poet, in my opinion, did intend to take the broad theme as the background. According to my reading, the poet has much more to convey than the deadness of a pig : his aim is to draw out the mystery of the 'being' of a species, to create a powerful image of 'pigness' dead and alive, to emphasize its utter differences from man. This I believe is the originality of Ted Hughes as a poet. The dead pig is a

reality in its own right. It does not arouse any of the feelings that a dead man would arouse. In life, it has nothing in common with man; its speed and agility are compared with a cat's and its squeal with the tearing of metal; pigs feel like ovens and their bite is worse than a horse's; they eat cinders and dead cats.

At the same time, death makes a world of difference to pigs — perhaps more than to man, because a man lives on in our memory : his deeds and words, our relations with him and so on. But a dead pig is a log of wood; with his heavy, rigid body and trotters struck out, the pig's deadness is its only reality and the thoughts of its past life are far from the poet's mind. But the poet does complete the view by adding his experience of a living piglet and a description in sensuous terms of the physical qualities and habits of pigs in general. A dead pig is more dead than a man and a living pig is more alive than a man.

There is one more question : the phrase *view of a pig* is grammatically ambiguous; it may mean either *pig viewed* or *pig viewing*. I don't think the poet was conscious of the latter meaning and it may be a purely personal interpretation on my part. As I read the poem I am aware not only of viewing a pig but also (the impact is so strong) of being attacked by a presence which rises aggressively from the dead. This is the kind of disturbing awareness which you sometimes have when you watch a dead man. It is a kind of myterious feeling which has been described by G. M. Hopkins in a theological context : he says, "when you look hard at a thing it seems to look hard at you."

Ambiguity

A word about ambiguity will not be out of place here. William Empson has discerned seven types of ambiguity.²⁹ A careful reading of his book will, however, show that in many places he has either tried to read too much into a poem, or has overlooked certain collocational features which demolish the

ambiguity. (As self-criticism, I might suggest that I may be overdoing interpretation when I see two meanings in *view of a pig* operative in the poem). Nonetheless Empson is right in emphasizing the importance of ambiguity as a mechanism in poetry.

Firth's approach to language study is based on the assumption that a piece of language receives its full meaning by reference to its context of situation.³⁰ Detached from its context, or used without a context, an expression is bound to be ambiguous. Leech³¹ and Turner³² have discussed ambiguity in relation to literary study. My aim here is to consider ambiguity in relation to contemporary verse. In my opinion the question of genuine ambiguity arises after both real and imagined contexts have been carefully considered, for, these contexts have a disambiguating effect. Even after this, if there is uncertainty regarding the meaning of a lexical or grammatical unit, we have a case of genuine ambiguity. Poets have made use of ambiguity in both its senses : (1) operation of an expression in two (or more) ways at the same time (2) an expression or expressions leading to an indefinite thought. Unconventional symbolism often gives rise to vague ideas or moods. Great modern poets like Eliot and Yeats make extensive use of this type of ambiguity to create higher or mystical moods. But most contemporary poets avoid this device because of their changed attitude to life and art. As will be clear from the interpretations in Chapters 2 and 3, wherever necessary, ambiguity is employed in contemporary poetry only in the first sense. Let us now resume our discussion of a poem's structure.

More Examples

In "Mrs. Root", Tony Conner is concerned with the personality of a busybody. In the first two stanzas a memorable picture of the lady is created through her social activities : there is hardly any public occasion in which she is not the most busy and prominent person. In the last stanza the semantic reference broadens; she is examined through the consciousness of others and what they did to her :

And nobody thanked her; Why doesn't
 she mind her own business ? they said
 who'd leant upon her. Crude and peasant-like
 her interest in brides, and the dead.
 I thought so too, yet still was loath
 to add my voice, sensing that
 my secret poems were like her actions : both
 pried into love and savoured death.

When we judge this stanza against the expectations aroused by the word *Mrs. Root*, we find that important additions have been made. First, a significant detail about others : "they said/who'd leant upon her." Public memory is short, people easily forget the helpful deeds of a person and tend to be ungrateful. And second, "my secret poems were like her actions." "My secret poems" is given importance by placing it in the beginning of a line and by making it the term compared—instead of saying "her actions were like my poems." It is these things which give additive character to the last stanza. But the added units do not destroy the unity of the poem—the overall design, because grammatically they are subordinate parts of the main sentence. Yet the comparison of the poems with Mrs. Root's actions is not a simple addition—rather it is overlaying, for we are forced to read the poem backwards and compare all the actions of Mrs. Root with the themes and techniques of the poems. The pregnant simile in the penultimate line makes for a richer experience of the poem.

We must carefully distinguish between the addition of a thought to the content of the title of a poem, or initial semantic material, and complex addition, which helps specification or generalisation as the case may be, and enriches the thought presented in a poem.

Amalgamation and Fusion

Addition may be very complex : it may be done by interpretation, overlaying, amalgamation, or fusion of two or more

semantic regions or scales. I have in mind 'semantic field'³³ in both its senses, although I consider the semantic manipulations of the poet too complex to be completely explained with the help of this concept. What is important for us is the bringing together of two or more worlds of experience and adding to the theme dimensions not allowed by common language. Common English would normally not allow, for example, a thought to be fragrant, the death of death ("death thou shalt die"), taking up arms against a sea, happiness to fields, creakiness to light, and so on.

Linguistically speaking, each word belongs to a cluster of words referring to a certain area of experience and has its position there in relation to other words. A *rose* for example belongs to the world of flowers and plants; it is associated with *leaf, thorn, dew, freshness, fragrance, colour*, etc.—things which do not form a natural part of a purely human situation. But when one calls a lady a 'rose', he is uniting the two worlds and attributing the beauty of nature to a human being. A garden is full of flowers and freshness and when a poet says : "There is a garden in her face", he is enriching a thought with the attributes of a garden. *Grave* and *bury* call up cessation of life, funeral, coffin, mourning, etc. but Shakespeare conveys a unique mood when he says : "Thou art the grave where buried love doth live." The *sun rises* and *sets*, it sends *rays* which reach us through openings in the house. Donne converts it into an officious person by applying human qualities :

Busy old fool, unruly Sun,

Why dost thou thus;

Through windows, and through curtains call on us ?

Connor's poem "An Evening at Home" opens :

Sensing a poem about to happen,

two letters demanded to be written.

He is presenting a kind of experience which poets have at one time or another, but it is an experience which is hard to

communicate in ordinary language : the conflict between reality and imagination. He therefore employs three words from different areas of experience : *sensing*, *happen* and *demand*. *Letters* are said to have *sensed* the imminent coming of a poem to the poet's mind. A poem is "about to happen", because it is like an event. *Letters* at this stage is ambiguous : Does it refer to written symbols, or personal communications ? The confusion is cleared in the next verse. It is the harsh realities of daily living which get the better of poetic inspiration; poetry is pathetically inadequate in the face of the grim facts of modern life. There is no difficulty in gathering the prose meaning, but the experience being communicated depends on the semantic complexity suggested above.

Poets also use such semantic complexity ornamentally. In this connection, I am reminded of the story of an Indian nabob who was fond of a rich diet. He used to cut up one chicken and feed it to another and this to a third and so on; he could thus speak of a dish twenty-chickens rich. In literary terms the Elizabethans and some Seventeenth Century writers desired such enrichment, using what are called mixed metaphors and metaphysical conceits. The contemporary poet, however, prefers plainness—even baldness sometimes; I say "sometimes" because if you closely examine contemporary poetry you will not find many poems which are completely devoid of figurative language. What is truer about contemporary verse is that it makes a sparing and very careful use of figurative language and spurns a high degree of complexity and invention. We have therefore to be all the more attentive to their use of such language.

Metaphor and Register-Mixing

At this point, I must say something about metaphor and registral manipulation between which I find a subtle relationship. Register is a use-oriented variety of a language distinguished according to field, mode and style of discourse.³⁴ Ideally, each of these aspects of register can be manipulated for a

variety of poetic effects. Turner has devoted a whole chapter to this topic with examples drawn from poetry and literary prose.³⁵ Leech has noted that register borrowing has been exploited with an unprecedented audacity by the poets of the present century.³⁶ He has in mind, of course, those who became famous before the Second World War. In contemporary poetry, registral borrowing and mixing are not so striking as in Donne or Eliot. Nevertheless, the contemporary poet makes a quite and subtle use of these devices requiring a fine analytical tool.

Each register has a characteristic style with grammatical and semantic structures and systems of lexical sets. We have to take into account a new development here. The modern poet has freed himself from the constraints of what may be called 'poetic language': he does not follow any conventional poetic style or diction; that is why it is difficult to talk in terms of poetry as a register. What is, then, the meaning of register borrowing and register-mixing? I again refer back to the dynamic nature of the poetic structure. We have to observe the title and the first sentence which may be couched in any one of the registers available, or in a mixture of registers. The first line of *The Waste Land*, for example, opens in a single register, namely, 'common', with of course, certain complexities. But in a proper reading the semantic complexity of the title must follow gradually and not precede it. Teachers and interpreters of this poem often fully explain the title before proceeding to the poem itself. The method reverses the order and deprives the learner of the thrill of discovery. On the other hand, Shakespeare begins in the following line with a mixture of registers :

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought

What I now propose is to subsume metaphor under registral mixture. This may at first seem implausible, but this alone can explain all forms of transfer of meaning from the subtlest to the crudest. It will also enable us to talk in terms of style-

metaphors, because, when only the style of a different register is borrowed, it does transfer a certain kind of meaning. A metaphor can be constructed both inter-registrally and intra-registrally. In the latter case the transfer is, for example, from a different lexical set within the same register as in *He ate the milk*.

A pragmatic approach to metaphor requires a keen perception of the structure of registers in terms of lexical sets and subsets representing smaller and smaller conceptual fields. A metaphor results when we conceive a certain kind of experience in terms of another. In the following lines, Ted Hughes creates metaphor inter-registrally by employing the legal register :

My manners are tearing off heads—

The allotment of death.

For the one path of my flight is direct

Through the bones of the living.

No arguments assert my right

(Hawk Roosting)

But in the first verse of "Deceptions" by Larkin metaphor arises from the mixture of two areas of perception :

Even so distant, I can taste the grief

This example reminds us of a significant aspect of contemporary poetry; it has utilized the metaphorical richness of ordinary speech. Common English is replete with highly effective metaphors which are capable of being revitalised.

A Complex Semantic Process

I have so far outlined two simple processes for a poem. There is also a third possibility : a mixture of the two. A poet may both cut and clip as well as add to the thought evoked by the title of a poem.

Let us turn to a poem called "The Room" written by C. Day Lewis. The word is more or less conceptual like *house* and elicits an idea, rather than any particular room, unless there

is a particular association in some reader's mind. But the accompanying definite article does prepare us for a particular room with an important function. The poet proceeds to specify it; we discover that this room is at the centre of a palace, that it is most secret—a sanctum—and :

windowless

Though airy, bare yet filled with the junk you find
In any child-loved attic

At the same time we also find that the aim is not a description of the room, for the poet broadens the reference. He is telling us about the life of a king in which "the room" has a unique importance; it is set in a larger frame and there is a good deal of talk about other things relating to the public duties of a king. As we read the poem we are overwhelmed by a crowding of public roles :

but no one, not even visiting royalty
Or reigning mistress, ever had been inside it
Graciously giving himself to, guarding himself from
Courtier, suppliant, stiff ambassador,
Supple assassin

Finally we come to know that the king stepped into the room
Simply to taste himself, to be reassured
That under the royal action and abstraction
He lived in, he was real.

We notice two things. "The room" now has resulted in a complex thought : an awareness of a well-guarded secret part of the personality, and a fear of abstractions of the public life of a king (which the modern reader comprehends to be an exaggeration of his own dilemma), which threaten to suppress, his concrete individuality.

The king went into the room every day to verify his own reality. Thus, far from being a poetic description of a room (which is also possible), the poem is directed towards building a mood of anxiety about the loss or diffusion of the private

self in an increasing abstraction in the society—something which is a matter of common experience in the modern culture, although not everyone can express it so well. The room is turned into a symbol of the private self, and the oppressiveness of social abstractions also becomes an important component of the poem; the two are related in the tension of the final mood.

Explanatory comments on the poem offered by Day Lewis himself are to be found in *Poet's Choice*, edited by Engle and Langland. He says it is "a profoundly personal poem which reads (I hope) like an impersonal one"; that it began with the words "to taste himself," that the room the king enters is "his solitude, his sanctum", and that :

the poem should have a similar meaning—about solitude and integrity—for any man or woman. If it has not, but is interpreted simply as yet another poem about "the poet's predicament in the modern world", or some such boring specialised subject—then it is worthless.

I think there is enough linguistic evidence against attaching a purely personal significance to the poem. It is written in the form of a parable. It is set in the past. A king is the central figure—enough to drive out the idea of a poet from the reader's mind. What the poet could think of doing is already discounted :

And we imagined it suitably fitted out
For communion with a God, for meditation
On the Just City; or, at least, a bower of
Superior orgies...

The style is also objective. No one therefore is in danger of mistaking the tone of the poem. There is no doubt Day Lewis, as an elderly poet involved in numerous public activities, keenly felt the pressure of abstraction and doubt about the existence of the individual core of his personality. But a profoundly personal mood or thought may also be profoundly

general or universal. And that is what has happened in this poem, though it may not have been the conscious intention of the writer. We cannot agree that the poem does not give voice to a dilemma of the modern man, of which the poet and the king are extreme examples. Abstraction in modern society is a spectre which has troubled not only poets, but philosophers and sociologists also. The threat posed to the individuality of man by modern conditions has been a burning topic for several decades; existentialism is only one of the thought-systems which have stressed the priority of existence over 'essence'.

The poet says the poem began with the phrase "to taste himself." This need, and the abstractions which surround man today, are as much a part of the poem as the secret-core of the personality. "To taste himself" could equally well be the heading and then we would have had a different starting point with, of course, the same result as far as the impact of the poem is concerned.

Sometimes, the semantic content of the title serves simply as a pretext for presenting a considerably different thought, although the image created by the title has to be constantly kept in mind. This is what happens in D. J. Enright's "Blue Umbrellas." In the first line we pass on to the thing which "makes a blue umbrella with its tail." The child's inquisitiveness about real things is satisfied by uttering a word. This is taken as a point of departure to create a feeling of loss—poverty of experience—due to our schooling system in which learning of words is made the end of education. The sight of a peacock is a rich experience which we mar by substituting a word :

The blue-tailed eccentrics will be merely peacocks; the dead
bird will no longer doze

Off till tomorrow's lark, for the letter has killed him.

The dictionary is opening, the gay umbrellas close.

What is important is not knowing the exact word (for that follows), but due attention to the thing or creature it denotes.

There is no substitute for a direct experience of reality. If you later try to compensate for the loss by writing poetry, that will give the image and something of the sensuous feel, but will still be far from the reality. You will be "seeking one spell to lift another curse."

Or you may, more commodiously, spy on your children,
busy discoverers,

Without the dubious benefit of rhyme.

Now it is easy to see how the idea aroused by *blue umbrellas* is specified, impregnated with emotion and added to in the making of the poem. It is not the 'thought' of the poem, for it is used only for comparison. There is much more in the poem than even *peacock*, for the poem is not about peacocks. In general terms it is about a tendency in people to assume that the word is more important than the world, and the loss it entails.

Yet a poem is not a statement. It is the structural design of a poem which affords satisfaction; and for the aesthetic mood to arise both *blue umbrellas* and *peacocks* are necessary. Indeed it would be hard to think of a better title. The poet has given the reader a good start by choosing *blue umbrellas* for the title of this poem.

What might be called semantic subtraction and addition can be seen in "The Ides of March" by Roy Fuller. The title brings to mind the day on which Julius Caesar was murdered by Brutus, Cassius, and other conspirators. The event has been immortalised by Shakespeare in his play, *Julius Caesar*. In the third line, it becomes clear that the poem does not encompass the whole situation. As we read on we discover that the poet is dealing with the thoughts of only one character, Brutus, on the night before the murder of Caesar, while the former is waiting in his orchard for the other conspirators. The mode is 'dramatic monologue'.

Obviously the poet is not rewriting a speech of Brutus : he is adding a new content to the situation, elaborating on the

secret motive of the man for joining hands with the conspirators. Brutus reflects on the character of the times and his own philosophical and literary leanings. He lists many considerations which weighed with him in making his decision, and then he comes to the point :

These subtleties are not, I think, important—
 No more than that I shall become a traitor.
 Technically, to my class, my friend, my country.
 No, the important thing is to remove
 Guilt from this orchard, which is why I have
 Invited here those men of action with
 Their simpler motives and their naked knives.

The vacillation of a man between a life of 'letters', which he is convinced has values of its own, and a life of action, is prominently dealt with. The style of the poem and the foregrounding of certain elements of the situation, make it plain that the historical framework is being described not for its own sake, but as an 'objective correlative' to highlight the dilemma of the writer himself. The reader also unmistakably takes the hint, for the contemporary intellectual is deeply aware of his 'culpable' position in the society.

The *Ides of March* is turned into a symbol. Figurative use of language, which I have already discussed, is essentially a device to extend the ordinary meaning of words—I am excluding merely decorative use, which probably no one will advocate today. For an example of such extension, we can consider a short poem by Robert Frost entitled "Fire and Ice."

The semantic implications of the title need to be studied; it brings together two opposite objects. Fire is associated with heat, light, flame—it burns things, and ice with cold, freezing, solidity—it bites. Some readers may also be aware of a common quality of both, the ability to destroy. Commenting on Frost's lyrics in an anthology of his poetry, Louis Untermeyer writes :

Forst's lyrics range from the facetious to the philosophic : often the two extremes are combined. Mostly, however, they begin with a simple idea and coax the reader, almost without his awareness to extend the implication of the idea far beyond its plain presentation.

We can see how this happens in this highly condensed poem. The poet first narrows the connotation to the all-destroying property of fire and ice by extreme heat and cold respectively. He is alluding to two well-known theories about the end of life on the earth. According to one theory, the temperature will continue rising until it reaches the point at which all life will be destroyed; the other holds that the sun, the prime source of energy for the earth, is gradually cooling, and a time will come when, in the absence of warmth, ice will advance and entomb the world. Then, under our very eyes, fire is turned into a symbol of lust :

From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire

And ice into that of hatred,

But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great

And would suffice

The poem has a contemporary flavour. It deals with two inner weaknesses of human nature which have the potential of destroying the world; it is not so much the external physical changes which augur ill for man as his own evil urges. The poet has said it all coolly without emotion and with classic ease and classic simplicity.

In this poem the poet has enlarged the theme by resorting to figurative language. But the symbolism is neither shocking nor erudite, as even the common speaker freely talks of "fire of desire" and "cold behaviour". Frost does not complicate the thought by calling upon the Buddha or Augustine.

The Structural Frame

After discussing the broad processes of poetic designing, we can now turn to structural formula for poems so as to render understanding and enjoyment more systematic and easy for the reader. Making due allowance for a continuous process of refining, we can say that a poem consists of three parts : title, thesis, and body. Title includes epigraph and dedication, if any. The 'thesis' I would define as the first statement in its totality of meaning—cognitive, emotive, relational. It may be expressed by a word, phrase, or clause, but generally it is a sentence of some form—declarative, interrogative, imperative, optative, exclamatory, etc. The thesis is followed by the body of the poem. The parts, however, should not be taken in a static sense because, as indicated earlier, the dynamic growth of a poem is vitally important.

Logic and Poetry

Before I proceed to explain the semantic constitution of a poem, just outlined, I must discuss a point which invites considerable controversy. It has been vigorously held by many philosophers and critics that poetry is not logical and rational, that from a logical point of view it is nothing but absurdity, and that you will spoil your pleasure if you try to conceive of a poem as a logical expression.

I. A. Richards has put forward an emotive theory of poetry. He makes a rather sharp distinction between symbolic (referential) and emotive use of words; he asserts that poetry is concerned with the emotive function of language. He also associates logic with science.³⁷ Cleanth Brooks by practical analysis of poems has tried to establish his thesis that paradox is central to the constitution of poetry.³⁸

I find it difficult to fully agree with this view. I would rather think of logic as basically an externalisation of the ways of the mind : our brain has developed certain basic instruments for comprehension and expression of reality as a result of interaction with the outside world; these instruments are part

of the attempt at survival. The basic rules of logic deal with these instruments. We habitually think in terms of class-membership, addition, sequence, association, similarity, opposition, implication, conclusion, cause and effect, part and whole, in and out, etc. The operation of these rules in cognitive thought is obvious. But the problem is, where do we draw a line between cognitive thought and emotion? Every thought has an emotive lining. Both intellect and emotion are involved in the acts of conception and expression; it is only a matter of proportion. It follows, then, that the expression of every emotion, mood, pleasure and pain has a logical scaffolding and core.³⁰ For example, there must be a cause for an emotion; an experience must be based on temporal and spatial relations, its elements must be interrelated. Even a mystical experience cannot be conveyed without such a rational framework :

But to apprehend

The point of intersection of the timeless
With time, is an occupation for the saint—

Or

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed.

Or

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come

Surrealist poetry is no exception; its rational base can be explored, whether the reader can reach out to that base is another matter. Where images really troop out of the unconscious and are not arranged or 'disarranged' according to a

theory, they are bound to have an interrelation and consistency of their own. For example, when we turn the searchlight on the interior of the unconscious (as we sometimes can), lines like the following begin to make sense :

Light breaks where no sun shines;
Where no sea runs, the waters of the heart
Push in their tides

Our difficulty with such poetry is that it requires the expert knowledge of the 'language' the Unconscious speaks. But there is no doubt that behind the 'acts' and 'thought' of the Unconscious lie rational purposes, for again, our deepest personality is also engaged in the overall effort to survive. It has been observationally proved that the Unconscious is capable of logical deduction and induction. For example, it abstracts rules of grammar from the linguistic material offered in conversation and applies it to fresh material, sometimes solves a nagging mathematical problem, and affords imaginative satisfaction in the event of failure.

We need not, therefore, deny that there is a rational kernel to each poem; moreover, the distance which the condensation of language has created must be traversed if a poem is to be understood and enjoyed. Working out the full rational base cannot destroy the aesthetic experience; rather it is a condition for full experience. Let me make this clear by an illustration : if you climb a high peak or tower, without turning your eyes around or downwards, you will experience nothing new, but once you look around and try to see how far the earth is below, you begin to have the sensation of height. It is the same with poetic experience; if you do not see the rational broad base and 'feel' your distance from it, you will derive little pleasure from poetry.

The rational structure underlying a poem is like the skeleton underneath the flesh, the rose of the cheek, and the velvet of the breast; it is like the boughs on which the blossom sits; it is the thought on which the feeling flowers. But I should not

be interpreted as holding that every poem should be reduced to a prose statement. My only aim is to suggest that the base should be recognized, for it is from this base that, by a series of gentle pushes, the poet raises us from the ground of prose to the height of poetry. These pushes constitute the aesthetic emotion; a poem is its making, as I have said.

Coherence and Cohesion

While dealing with the logical infra-structure of poems, we will do well to examine the concept of connection. Linking or connection when treated as an aspect of a text, has a much wider scope than I have indicated thus far. The basic characteristic of a text is its unity, and unity is achieved, chiefly if not wholly, by means of coherence and cohesion. H. G. Widdowson, in a book on language teaching, suggests that coherence should be understood as referring to a covert relationship between the illocutionary acts performed through the propositions in a text and cohesion to overt relationship between propositions expressed through sentences.⁴⁰ This distinction can be usefully explored if we consider poetry to be a special kind of speech act or a series of speech acts. I would, however, be content to agree with Lyons, who thinks "it has to do with the difference between form and content."⁴¹ But, I wish to apply the term "content" to the experiential matter. Coherence is present where two propositions go together in terms of human experience, e.g., *Mary is ill. She is lying in bed.* In poetic communication, coherence may not always be so obvious; it may be 'deep coherence', with the propositions being relevant to one another in terms of psychological association, archetypal framework, or even musical pattern.

Halliday and Hasan have attempted a full treatment of cohesion in English.⁴² Cohesion is overt linking achieved by using some linguistic means, e. g., anaphora, conjuncts, synonyms, grammatical parallelism. Halliday and Hasan have observed that "the concept of cohesion is a semantic one; it refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text, and

that define it as a text.”⁴³ Cohesive devices thus embody meaning relations between linguistic units within a text. It should, however, be noted that they are outside of, or in addition to, the basic structural patterns, e. g., S+V+O, Adj+N.

In normal speech, coherence is judged by reference to a given area of common experience, while cohesion is judged against the speaker's intention to view the propositions in a certain manner. Let me explain the difference with the help of some examples :

(a) Mary is ill. She is lying in bed.

(b) Mary is ill. She is playing football.

(c) Mary is ill. She is looking at her father's picture.

In (a) the meanings of the two sentences are seen to cohere by reference to our experience. In (b) there is no coherence; the sentences can, however, be connected by using cohesive words such as *but*, *still*, or *yet*, according to the view taken by the speaker. Example (c) requires interpretation; we must search for a basis on which the two sentences can be related; it may be psychological, or symbolic, or contextual. This has brought us close to coherence and cohesion in poetry.

Gutwinski has attempted to describe cohesion in literary texts.⁴⁴ However, I do not wish to enter into intricate details for two reasons : first, what I have said on cohesion and coherence so far seems to be adequate for our purpose; second, contemporary poetry, with its neo-Augustan leanings, seldom resorts to complex or suppressed connection. This will be clear to any one who compares this phenomenon in the poetry of T. S. Eliot and Philip Larkin. Nevertheless, some general observations should be made. One basic consideration is that when a piece of language is presented to us, we insist on interpreting it as a text. “It is impossible to construct a verbal sequence which has no texture at all—but this, in turn, is largely because we insist on interpreting any passage as text if there is the remotest possibility of doing so.”⁴⁵ When we

encounter difficulties in establishing cohesion and coherence, we exercise our imagination to supply a suitable situation and reference. This according to Halliday and Hasan "is an essential element in all imaginative writing".⁴⁶ In our study of contemporary poetry, we require an awareness of the general context of situation (already presented, pp. 11-15) to understand the exophoric references.

It is also worth mentioning that poetry makes use of certain special cohesive devices. These are sound patterns, grammatical parallelism, and certain figures of speech. There are many illustrations of their cohesive role in Chapters 3 and 4.

Superlinking

Now let us turn to our model. The title may or may not be directly connected with the thesis; but it does have logical links with the poem; otherwise it cannot be a title of the poem. As a matter of fact, when it comes to deciding a title, reason plays a greater role than in composition and the title has "a great deal to do with the poem".⁴⁷ The title may linguistically make contact with the poem at one or more points by the use of cohesive features : deixis, substitution, repetition, etc. Take the following examples chosen at random :

(1) An Early Death

This is the day his death will be remembered
By all who weep ;
This is the day his grief will be remembered
By all who grieve.

(Sidney Keyes)

(2) In Church

Often I try
To analyse the quality
Of its silences.

(R. S. Thomas)

(44)

(3) Metaphors

I'm a riddle in nine syllables,
 An elephant, a ponderous house,
 A melon strolling on two tendrils.

(Sylvia Plath)

(4) Money

I was led into captivity by the bitch business
 Not in love but what seemed a physical necessity
 And now I cannot even watch the spring
 The itch for subsistence having become responsibility.

(C. H. Sisson)

(5) Nothing

Her sixth midsummer eve keeps Ruth awake.

(Edward Lowbury)

(6) The Second Coming

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
 The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
 Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.
 The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
 The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
 The best lack all conviction, while the worst
 Are full of passionate intensity.

(W. B. Yeats)

In the first example, the main word in the title is repeated in the first line. The pronoun points to the death of a certain person who is not so important as to be mentioned by name. The opening word connects the title historically. "The day" revives in the mind of the poet the memory of the death of a certain man. But this is only one part of the title; the adjective "early" remains to be connected elsewhere.

In church is a general locative. It is different in meaning from *in the church*, which suggests 'being in a particular church'. The distinction is the same as between *in school* and *in the school*; while the latter refers to presence in a particular school, the former indicates engagement in the activity associated with 'school', i. e., studying. *In church* also has a general signification referring to what is generally done in churches. It is to this double sense that we have to connect the thesis of the poem. The first sentence is related to the title in two ways : first, by the pronoun *its*; second, by the meditative tone which is associated with religious temperament.

In the third example, the logical relation is general to particular. "Metaphors" is to "I'm a riddle in nine syllables", etc. what men is to John, etc. There is, however, one more possibility : "metaphors" may have a less general meaning; it may refer only to that which is given in the poem. This can be explained by illustrating the use of *men* in a restrictive sense. Suppose that you are waiting for five known persons; when they arrive, someone announces *mən*; he has exhausted the group and you expect the five men to appear. Using one type of relation rather than the other, I think, will make a difference in our reading and enjoyment of the poem.

The word *money* is not directly related to what Sisson says in the first sentence. It is noticeable that the indirect link is made through the word *business*. Semantically *money* and *business* belong to the same group. They denote items belonging to the same area of human activity; between themselves they have a specific relation : money is the backbone of business and business brings money. Therefore when a reader sees the word *business* he is reminded of the title and their interrelation. In fact the mood of gradual and deceitful enslavement to money, and all that it symbolises through the compelling temptation offered by business, is the main plank of the poem.

There is a complete lack of logical connection between the

title and the thesis in Lowbury's poem. We are only told that Ruth is feeling uneasy on her sixth midsummer eve. We are kept wondering what this uneasiness has to do with *nothing*. The unrelatedness of title and thesis helps create tension in the mind of the reader and urges him on. *Nothing* also covers a wide range of meaning and requires to be moored to a specific sense. It is later in the poem that the link is established.

In the well-known last example we find a similar lack of connection. The first stanza of the poem creates a powerful impression of the disintegration of life at psychological, social, political, and moral levels, but it has no necessary relation with the title. We cannot claim that, since this is the state of affairs, the Second Coming is at hand. It is a matter of personal logic; in Yeats's conception of history this condition is a signal for a new 'incarnation'. It is at the next turning in the first line of stanza two that we comprehend the relation. The advantage of non-connection—or a very tenuous connection, if at all, for some knowing readers—is considerable. The first stanza independently read creates a powerful and universal sense of malaise, and the theme is keyed up emotionally when we perceive the rational ground in the second stanza.

I have given some examples of the relationship between the title and the thesis. There are endless variations practised by poets, but it should be noted that the study of this link is very important for understanding a poem.

Linguistic Manipulation

The rest of the poem, 'the body', is in incontinuation with the thesis. It is not to be conceived as a block. Rather, it is a series of touches and turns given successively to the thought of the thesis. If we treat the poem as a series of sentences, each successive sentence modifies the thought and at each point of contact with the title a new colouring is given to the theme and emotion.

The touches and turns are given by means of linguistic manipulations. A major task therefore is first to study the

movement of a poem in terms of such manipulations in phonology, grammar, and semantics. (As stated earlier, I have omitted the phonological level in this work.) Second, a linguistic picture of the poem is to be obtained. I have found that such a linguistic picture can offer very deep insight into the poem.

In a study of some poems of John Donne (which I supervised), it was found that the poet's use of pronouns, adjectives, nominal groups, adverbs of time, sentence types and semantic classes can be helpful in deciding many important issues. For example, how serious Donne is in "Go and Catch a Falling Star", or how extreme is the dark sentiment in "The Apparition"; we have shown that "The Triple Fool" hides behind its facetiousness and ingenuity a serious exploration of the consequences of love and a personal theory of literature.⁴⁸

Denoting and Connoting

We are now in a position to illustrate the application of the model. I have selected some contemporary poems for study. In the analytical portion, I have assigned semantic values like general/specific, denotative connotative on the basis of common usage and not the expressive meaning an item has in the poem, for that would have resulted in circularity. It is for the interpretation to show how an item has been handled in the poem. Let me make this clearer by examples.

Consider the words *science*, *chemistry* and *love*. The first two are denotative, having well-defined, objective meaning in common English, while the last is highly connotative, arousing a complex of feelings in each individual ranging from gross sexual desire to agape. Wherever these words occur in a poem, they are given their usual labels, denotative or connotative (or emotive), as the case may be. This does not mean that in the poetic context they are necessarily so, for their meaning may have been modified by the use of other words. How the poet has moulded the meaning of a word will appear in the

interpretation. In fact we can describe semantic manipulations in terms of the common meaning much better than otherwise. However, when we consider the general patterning statistically, then we label a word according to its final significance in the poem, where required.

Now suppose we have the expression *chemistry of alkaloids* or, *chemistry of plants*, the word chemistry has a purely cognitive meaning. In *college chemistry*, the meaning has a slight connotative colouring, since it suggests a general treatment of the subject, easy presentation, etc.; *chemistry for everybody* is more so. We have to ignore such minor distinctions unless significant in poetry. But *love's chemistry* is different, for it is no ordinary chemistry; the meaning is significantly changed. Here *chemistry* refers to the change in the soul or heart which love brings about; each reader also assigns additional undertones according to his experience. In this expression the word *chemistry* has been dragged into a different semantic class. The poet's 'treatment' can be discussed usefully by marking the word 'denotative' in the analysis and then proceeding to interpret the colouration it is made to take on.

Sometimes a denotative word may be so strong that it affects the other term, instead of undergoing a semantic change itself. *Science* is such a word. It is being used by authors who claim to present a purely descriptive treatment of social and human phenomena. If someone were to use *the science of making friends* it would be in contradistinction with *the art of making friends*. We also hear of the *science of love*, or the *science of sex*. In all such cases we find the connotative force of the other nouns being weakened by the strong denotative pull of *science*. An opposite process takes place when an author decides to call his book, *The Art of Scientific Investigation*.⁴⁹

Contentivity

There is again an easily recognisable distinction between form and content words—in most cases. Conjunctions, preposi-

tions, auxiliary verbs, and relative pronouns, are syntactic devices confined to the linguistic system itself and do not refer to anything outside the language, unlike for example, *boy*, *table*, *grief*, and *mysticism*, which do. They will therefore be marked as structure words. But if any of these words are used by the poet, such that they receive value, this must be explained. Take the example, *He is*, not as elliptical, but as a self-sufficient utterance. Here the verb *to be* which is a copula is being used as a main verb with lexical force, it emphasizes the existence or 'being' of a person; so we may say it has become charged with content. In the following lines Hugh MacDiarmid has successfully contentivised two prepositions :

Michael Roberts and All Angels ! Auden, Spender, those
bhoyos,

All yellow twicers : not one of them

With a tithe of Carlyle's courage and integrity.

Unlike these pseudos I am *of*—not *for*—the working class.

We can easily see how two kinds of relationships are contrasted here; it is not merely a matter of emphasis. *Of* acquires a good deal of content : insider, an integral part of, struggling and suffering with; while *for* suggests outsider, mere sympathiser, unacquainted with, etc. etc.

Linguistic Choices

I consider it most important to emphasize here a point which ought to be obvious to anyone who has tried to scribble a few lines of poetry : it is a careful search by the poet not only for the most appropriate word, but also for the right grammatical form—"Should I use singular or plural, past tense or present perfect ?" This does not mean that everyone who writes poetry is a master of semantics and grammar, but it does suggest that the choices made by the poet do involve semantics and grammar. It is also possible that the choices have been almost unconscious; nevertheless, their effect stems from the underlying linguistic structure and can be explained from that base. It is on this ground, I believe, that the detailed

analysis I have given is justified. Even those who are inclined to disagree (including the poets themselves) with my interpretation of the poems, will find themselves with better reasons to do so than mere subjective reaction.

Notes

1. H. G. Widdowson, "Stylistics" in *Techniques in Applied Linguistics*, ed. J. P. S. Allen and S. Pit Corder (London : O. U. P., 1974), pp. 219-227.
2. Samuel R. Levin, *Linguistic Structures in Poetry* (The Hague ; Mouton, 1962).
3. A. A. Hill, "An Analysis of the Windhover : An Experiment in Structural Method", *PMLA*, LXX (1955).
4. "Descriptive Linguistics in Literary Studies" in Angus McIntosh and M. A. K. Halliday, *Patterns of Language : Papers in General, Descriptive and Applied Linguistics* (London : Longmans, 1966).
5. J. McH. Sinclair, "Taking a Poem to Pieces" in *Essays on Style and Language*, ed. Roger Fowler (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).
6. J. P. Thorne, "Stylistics and Generative Grammars" in *Linguistics and Literary Style*, ed. Donald C. Freeman (New York : Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), pp. 185-86.
7. Geoffrey N. Leech, *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* (London : Longman, 1969).
8. G. N. Leech, "This Bread I Break"—Language and Interpretation" in *Linguistics and Literary Style*, ed. Donald C. Freeman.
9. A simple and useful discussion of various kinds of models can be found in Marshall Walker, *The Nature of Scientific Thought* (New Delhi : M. Sundaram, 1963).
10. A fair idea of the diversity of critical attitudes can be gathered from David Daiches, *Critical Approaches to Literature* (London : Longman, 1956). Percipient allusions to various critical stances are also made by Rene Wellek and Austin Warren in *Theory of Literature* (Harmondsworth ; Penguin Books, 1963). A broad sampling of modern criticism is available in *20th Century Literature Criticism*, ed. David Lodge (London : Longman, 1972).

11. I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1925).
12. Nils Erik Enkvist, John Spencer and Michael J. Gregory, *Linguistics and Style* (London : O. U. P., 1964), p. 4.
- 13 Randolph Quirk has produced the testimony of poets themselves in the chapter entitled "The Intolerable Wrestle with Words" in his book, *The Use of English* (London : ELBS, 1972).
- 14 On ordinary and poetic communication see John Lyons, *Semantics* (London : Cambridge University Press, 1977) I, Chap 2.
15. Winifred Nowottny, *The Language Poets Use* (London : The Athlone Press, 1962), p. 1.
16. M. L. Rosenthal, "Foreword", *Poetry and the Common Life* (New York : O. U. P., 1974).
17. A Korzybski, *Science and Sanity : An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics* (Lancaster, Pa : International Non-Aristotelian Library, 1933).
18. S. I. Hayakawa, *Language in Thought and Action* (New York : Harcourt, Brace, 1949).
19. Geoffrey N. Leech and Michael H. Short, *Style in Fiction : A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose* (London: Longman, 1981), p. 211.
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CHAPTER-2

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Grammatical Framework

Before we turn to the practical task of analysis and interpretation, it is desirable to say something about the method and tools. I have given a detailed grammatical and semantic analysis of Philip Larkin's poem "Wants". I have mainly, but not entirely, made use of the grammatical categories and distinctions made by R. Quirk, S. Greenbaum, G. Leech and J. Svartvik in their work, *A Grammar of Contemporary English*.¹ The grammatical analysis printed above each line is made at the following levels vertically arranged : morpheme, word-class, phrase, clause structure, word order, clause type, sentence-types, and style. Semantic analysis given below each line includes the following levels :

Contentive/structural
 denotative/connotative/emotive
 unique/particular/general
 concrete/abstract
 register

A list of abbreviations used in the analysis is also supplied.

Semantic Categories

A word is needed to explain and justify some of the distinctions I have used in the semantic analysis. In addition to 'denotative' and 'connotative', I have set up a third category- 'emotive'. I employ the term in the literal sense, that is, 'signifying an emotion'. Emotions are clearly distinguished from feelings in some respects.² They are more fundamental than feelings. Emotions have provided some basic unifying themes to the poetry of mankind across time and space, but

each age has a different attitude towards their expression. They are fewer than feelings; Descartes mentioned sex, desire, hate, wonder, joy, sorrow and love. Emotions affect the personality more deeply than feelings and involve conative element. In aesthetic experience, therefore, it seems desirable to make a distinction between connotative and emotive words, although an absolute demarcation is difficult to make.

I have further distinguished emotive words as positive or negative, since this seems helpful. Similarly, in differentiating connotative words, I have used Wundt's sub-classification of feelings along three dimensions : pleasantness/unpleasantness, strain/relaxation, excitement/calm.³ To me this classification appears helpful for literary analysis although the Tri-dimensional Theory of Wundt has been hotly disputed.

I have also found it helpful to subdivide the 'particular/general' scale. There are words in language which identify a single individual as different from all others, such as Michael Faraday, John, the Ganges. Such items have a unique reference. They ought to be distinguished from words which refer to an object or person or idea as a particular member of a class, e. g., (a) mountain, (a) man, (the) man, (a) feeling; these have a particularised reference. The words cited above can also stand for or imply a whole class of objects or beings: in that case they are generic. Lastly, we have words which represent the broadest undifferentiated entities and generalised designations. On these grounds I have set up four terms :

Unique	Particular	generic	general
John	(a/the) man	(a/the) man	humanity (in abstract sense)
The Ganges	(a/the) river	(a/the) river	water
-	blood-red	red	redness
-	shoot	kill	destory

Some more explanation is perhaps expected. "One of the principal sources of vagueness" writes Ullmann "is the generic character of our words".⁴ This certainly applies to English :

the core-meaning has a reference to a class of objects or ideas, e.g., *man, table, feeling, mountain*. When we wish to point out a particular member we use the articles. In this respect the distinction between *a* and *the* is merely linguistic. When we introduce a noun for the first time, we use *a*, e.g. *I saw a gorilla today*. The word refers to a particular member of a class (Mark that *a* can also be used to bring out the generic meaning as in, *A gorilla is herbivorous*). When a second reference is made to the particular referent, we use *the*, *The gorilla was holding a gun in his hand*. *The* can also bring out generic signification as in *the gorilla is herbivorous*. This shows that *a* and *the* can be used either for particular, or generic reference.

The two-term division into 'concrete' and 'abstract' is also not satisfactory. Semantic concreteness should not be assigned on the basis of physical criteria alone. However vague, the psycholinguistic impact of a word also matters. In literary interpretation particularly, psychological concreteness ought to be taken into account and words suggesting feelings and emotions must be treated as concrete rather than abstract. On this basis we can reasonably think of three classes : words recalling percepts, that is, direct experience through the senses, words containing a degree of generalisation or combination but still closely linked which percepts, and finally words in which sensuous perception has a nominal share in the meaning. We thus get three positions :

Concrete-1	Concrete-2	Abstract
John	man	humanity
The Himalayas	mountain	height
hate	criticise	analyse
sweet	delicious	nutritious

An can be guessed from the above, I have tried to apply semantic classification to all classes of contentive words; it is possible to think in terms of 'particular-general' or 'concrete-abstract' not only about nouns but also about verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

Word-by-word analysis is followed by overall structural and semantic 'pictures' of the poem.

List of Abbreviations

A		Adverbial
ab		abstract
adj		adjective
stat.		stative
g		gradable
non-g		non-gradable
Adj. P.		Adjectival phrase
adv		adverb
Adv. P.		Adverbial phrase
art		article
def		definite
ind		indefinite
c		contentive word
Cl		clause
Comp		complement
Conc		concrete
Conn		connotative
	pl	pleasant
	unp	unpleasant
	exci	excitement
	cal	calm
	relax	relaxation
	str	strain
Den		denotative
	f	favourable
	unf	unfavourable
	neut	neutral
Em		emotive
	pos	positive
	neg	negative
G		general
gen		generic
mf		free morpheme

mb		bound morpheme
	pref	prefix
	suff	suffix
	der	derivational
	inf	inflexional
N		Noun
	sing	singular
	pl	plural
	m	prehead modifier
	h	head-noun
	q	post-head modifier
NP		noun phrase
O		object
	d	direct (object)
p		particular
Prep		preposition
Prep P.		prepositional phrase
Pron		Pronoun
	pers	personal
	I	first person
	II	second person
	III	third person
	dem	demonstrative
S		subject
s		structure word
U		unique
V		verb as sentence unit
VP		verb phrase
v		verb as word class
	fi	finite
	nonfi	nonfinite
	intr	intransitive
	monotr	monotransitive
	dyn	dynamic
	stat	stative
	aux	auxiliary
	pass	passive
	part	participle

(60)

Philip Larkin

Text

Wants

Beyond all this, the wish to be alone :
However the sky grows dark with invitation-cards
However we follow the printed directions of sex
However the family is photographed under the flagstaff—
Beyond all this, the wish to be alone.

Beneath it all, desire of oblivion runs :
Despite the artful tensions of the calendar,
The life insurance, the tabled fertility rites,
The costly aversion of the eyes from death—
Beneath it all, desire of oblivion runs.

(161)

ANALYSIS**Wants****Philip Larkin**

N
Common
Count

mf

mb
Suff.
Inf.

WANT

S

c

Den

neut

gen

Conc-2

daily
living

(62)

Informal style
Declarative
Periodic
Complex

Main clause

Non-normal
Verbless clause

A					S		
Prep. P					NP		
Prep.	adj	Pron.	art.	N	verb	adj	
Simple	stat.	Dem.	def.	Count	nonfi	stat.	
position	non-g			sing.	stat.	non-g	
orientation							
mf	mf	mf	mf	mf	mf	mf	mf
Beyond	all	this,	the	wish	<u>to be</u>	alone	
s	c	c	s	c	s s	c	
-	Den	Den	-	Conn	- -	Conn	
	neut	neut		pl		pl	
				str		relax	
				exci		cal	
-	gen	-	-	p	- -	p	
-	Conc-2	Conc-2	-	Conc-2	- -	Conc-2	
-	-	-	-	common	- -	common	
				psycho-		psycho-	
				logical		logical	

Dependent clause

Normal

A	Adv. P	S	V	C	A
adv	art	NP	VP	Adj P	Prep P
condition	def	N	v	adj	N
intensifying		Common	Dyn	dyn	Common
mf	mf	Mass	intr	g	Count
		mf	mf	mf	mf
			mb	mb	mb
			suff	suff	suff
			inf	der	inf
					pl
					s
However	the	sky	grow	dark	with
c	s	c	c	c	c
Den	-	Den	Den	Conn	Conn
		neut	neut	unpl	pl
				str	str
				exci	exci
				gen	gen
G	-	U	gen	Conc-2	Conc-2
ab	-	Conc-1	Conc-2	Nature	social
.	-	Nature	.		

(64)

		Dependent clause									
		Normal									
A	S	V							Od		
Adv. P	NP	v							NP		
Adv	pron	v			adj				N	Prep	N
condition	pl	dyn			stat				Common	simple	Common
intensifying		mono-tr			non-gr				Count	Relation	Mass
mf	mf	mf	mf	mf	mf	mb	mb	mb	mf	mb	mf
						suff	suff				
						Infl				der	
						Past					
However	we	follow	the	print	ed	direction	s	of	sex		
c	c	c	s	c	c	c	c	s	c		
Den	Den	Den	-	Den	Den	Den	Den	-	Em		
	neut	neut		neut	neut	neut	neut		pos		
G	gen	gen	-	gen	gen	gen	gen	-	gen		
ab	Conc-2	Conc-2	-	Conc-2	Conc-2	Conc-2	Conc-2	-	Conc-2		
	-	-	-	-	-	Medical	Advertising	-	sex		

(65)

Dependent															
Normal															
A		S		V		VP		A		Prep P		N		mf	
Adv.P		NP		v		fi		dyn		Mono-tr		mb		suff	
adv.		art		aux		Pas		v		mb		suff		Infl	
condition		def		Common		Pas		fi		mb		suff		Infl	
intensifying		art		N		aux		v		mb		suff		Infl	
mf		mf		mf		mf		mf		mb		suff		Infl	
However the family is photograph ed															
c		s		c		s		c		Den		neut		gen	
Den		-		Den		neut		gen		Conc-2		Conc-2		social	
unf		-		neut		gen		Conc-2		Conc-2		Conc-2		social	
G		-		gen		Conc-2		Conc-2		Conc-2		Conc-2		social	
ab		-		Conc-2		Conc-2		Conc-2		Conc-2		Conc-2		social	
r		-		social		social		social		social		social		social	

(66)

Non-normal (Verbless clause)		S		NP		V		adj		stat		non-g	
A		Pro		art		N		Common		Count		sing	
Prep P		adj		stat		non-gr		mf		mf		mf	
Prep		Simple		Position		Orientation		mf		mf		mf	
Beyond	mf	all	mf	this,	mf	the	mf	wish	mf	to	mf	alone	mf
s		c	c	s	s	c	c	s	s	s	s	c	c
-		Den	Den	-	-	Conn	Conn	-	-	-	-	Conn	Conn
		neut	neut			pl	pl	str	str	pl	pl	relax	relax
						exci	exci			cal	cal		
-		gen	-	-	-	p	p	-	-	p	p	Conc-2	Conc-2
-		Conc-2	Conc-2	-	-	Conc-2	Conc-2	-	-	-	-	Common	Common
-		-	-	-	-	Common	Common	-	-	-	-	psycho-	psycho-
						logy	logy						

(67)

Main			Non-normal			clause		
			</					

(68),

p	gen	gen	gen
Conc-2	Conc-2	Conc-2	Conc-2
Common	Common	Common	Common
	psycho-	psycho-	psycho-
	logy	logy	logy

(69)

Normal		A		Prep P		N		Prep		art		N	
						Common		relation		def		Common	
						Count						Count	
						mf		mb		mf		mf	
								suff					
								inf					
								pl					
						tension		s		of		the calendar,	
						c		-		s		c	
						Conn		-		-		Den	
						unp		-		-		neut	
						str		-		-		gen	
						exci		-		-		Conc-2	
						gen		-		-		Common	
						Conc-2		-		-			
						aesthetics/		-		-			
						common		-		-			
						psych.		-		-			

(70)

art	N	N	art	adj	N	N
def	Common	Common	def	stat	Common	Common
mf	Count	Mass	mf	non-g	Mass	Count
	mf	mf	mb	mb	mf	mf
			suff	suff	suff	
			der	inf	der	
The	life	in	ance, the	ed	fertil	ity
s	c	sur	s	table	c	rites,
-	Den	c	-	c	Den	c
	neut	f		Den	neut	Den
	gen	gen	-	neut	gen	neut
Conc-2	Conc-2	Conc-2	-	Conc-2	Conc-2	Conc-2
		Urban living		Common		Anthropology

(71)

NP									
art	adj	N		Prep	art	N		Prep	N
def	stat	Common		relation	def	Common		negative	Common
	gr	Count				Count		destina-	Mass
								tion	
mf	mf	mb	mf	mb	mf	mf	mb	mf	mf
		suff		suff			suff		
		der		der			infl		
							pl		
The	Cost	ly	av	ion	the	eye	s	from	death -
s	c		c		s		c	s	c
-	Den		Conn		-		Den	-	Em
	neut		unpl				neut		neg
			str						
			exci						
	gen		gen		-		gen	-	p
-	Conc-2		Conc-2		-		Conc-2	-	Conc-2
-	Buying		Common		-		Common	-	Common
-			psycho-						
-			logy						

Non-normal		A		Non-normal		S		V	
Prep	Rel. position	Prep P	adj	N	NP	Prep	N	Common	VP
Vertical		pron	stat	Common	simple	mf	mf	Common	v
mf		mf	mf	Count	relation	mf	mf	intr	dyn
Beneath	it	all,	desire	of	oblivion	run	mf	mb	suff
s	c	c	c	s	c	c	c	infl	s
-	Den	Den	Conn	-	Conn	Den	Den	neut	
	neut	neut	pl		unpl	relax	cal	gen	Conc-2
	p	gen	gen	-	gen	Conc-2	Common	Conc-2	
	Conc-2	Conc-2	Conc-2	-	Conc-2	Common	psycho-		
	Common	-	Common	-	Common	psycho-	logy		

Linguistic Pictures**1. Morphemes**

Free morphemes 77

Bound morphemes

Suffixes inf 11

Suffixes der 7

Prefixes der 1

2. Word-Class Picture

(a) Prep. adj. Pron (dem), art (def). N. V (inf). Adj :

adv. art (def) N. V. adj. Prep. N-N—

adv. Pron (Pers.) V. art (def). adj (Part.). N. Prep. N.

adv. art (def) N.V. (aux. pass.) V (lex.) Prep. art (def)

NN—

Prep. adj Pron (dem), art (def.) N. V (inf). adj.

Prep. Pron. adj., N. Prep. N. V. :

Prep. art (def). adj. N. Prep. art (def). N.,

art (def). N.N., art (def). adj (Part.). N.N.,

art (def). adj. N. Prep. art (def). N. Prep. N.—

Prep. Pron. adj., N. Prep. N.V.

(b) Noun ... 21

Pronoun ... 5 (2 repeated)

Article (Definite) ... 12

Adjective ... 11

Preposition ... 13

Verb : Finite ... 5

Non-finite ... 2

Auxiliary ... 3

Adverb ... 3

TOTAL ... 75-2=73**Sentence Picture**

No. of sentences — 2

Sentence types I — Complex Simple

Sentence type II — Declarative Declarative

(74)

Sentence type III — Periodic Periodic
 Sentence structure I — Main Cl. Adv. Cl. Adv. Cl.
 Adv. Cl.—Main Clause (Repeated)
 Main Cl. (Part of) Main Cl.
 (Repeated)

Sentence structure II — A S A A A - A S (Repeated)
 A S V A - A S V (Repeated)

Clause Picture

No. of clauses — 4+1 (Repeated)
 1 (Part repeated)

Clause structure — A S/A S V C A/A S V O/A S V A
 A S (Repeated). A S V A - A S V
 (Repeated)

NP Structure

all this	... mh	
the wish	... mh	
the sky	... mh	
invitation-cards	... (m) h	
the printed directions of sex	... mmhq	
the family	... mh	
the flagstaff	... (m) h	
all this	... mh	] (Repeated)
the wish	... mh	
it all	... hq	
desire of oblivion	... hq	
the artful tensions of the Calendar	... mmhq	
the life-insurance	... m(m)h	
the tabled fertility rites	... mm(m)h	
the costly aversion of the eyes		
from death	... mmhq	
it all	... hq	] (Repeated)
desire of oblivion	... hq	

Semantic Picture

(a) Content and structure words

S. C. C. S. C. S. C.

(75)

C. S. C. C. C. S. C. C.

C. C. C. S. C. C. S. C.

C. S. C. S. C. S. S. C. —

S. C. C. S. C. S. C.

S. C. C. C. S. C. C.

S. S. C. C. S. S. C.

S. C. C. S. C. C. C.

S. C. C. S. S. C. S. C. —

S. C. C. C. S. C. C.

c = 45

s = 28

Total 73

(b) Content words

(1) Den.	Conn	Emo.		
31	12	2		
(2) Unique	Particular	Generic	General	
1	9	32	3	
(3) Concrete-1	Concrete-2	Abstract		
1	41	3		

Interpretation

The title consists of a noun and the plural ending. The plural suffix suggests a somewhat special sense; the word denotes a class of desires for things which are considered to be necessary to life in society. The economist tells us that if the wants are fulfilled, a man is able to lead a good and happy life. The title thus raises a central issue in modern life; we are on the borderline of economics, which studies how man's physical needs and wants are supplied. It is presumed that the empirical scientist can decide what are the wants of men, and that the key to human happiness lies in the satisfaction of wants.

The title stimulates the central area of our consciousness; the majority of people today are keenly, often painfully, made aware of their economic wants. Apart from the affluent

few for whom 'want' is no more than an economic concept, the idea has a universal importance in social life; it is a majority concern and the title has the widest appeal. I have marked the item 'denotative, neutral', but it must be noted that, although the economic sense is inevitably called to mind, the term also has an 'affective' touch for most working and middle-class people, and for many it has an unpleasant connotation, creating strain and anxiety.

A word is like the stump of a plant. When you pull it out, it brings a plethora of associations along. The word *wants* recalls housing, clothes, cosmetics, financial security, social contacts, etc. It raises a picture of the kind of living called 'good' by our modern standards.

This is the semantic background for the first line. We feel a little surprised and shocked, for none of the words are apparently related to the title. Not one item is associated with the problem of daily living as commonly conceived. Our mind expects smooth logical passage from thought to thought, which is lacking here. There is a semantic, logical, and psychological contrast and distance between the title and the first line. *Wants* is in clear contrast with *wish* in many ways. *Wish* is the only full-content word in the first line, the post-modifier being used to identify it. 'Want' is central to ordinary reality, it has an objective meaning, it is of the present; 'wish' dwells on the mind, it is counterpoised to the humdrum life and looks to the future.

There is a simple, unlinked, juxtaposition of reality and surreality. It is reinforced syntactically by three devices: the use of the preposition, word-order, and ellipsis of the verb. *Beyond* is a preposition of orientative position: it indicates the situation of one item in directional relation to another. It is primarily of spatial dimension, e. g. : *The temple is situated beyond the village*. The poet exploits this property and faintly arouses our sense of spatial position; we become aware of two thought-complexes like two features of a landscape. The

arrangement of sentence elements is not in normal order; the adverbial is foregrounded by non-normal word order—again a question of positioning. Thirdly, the clause contains no finite verb. This again makes us conscious of mental ‘objects’ situated at two different ‘places’, unmixed by any kind of temporal activity. The static concreteness has been achieved by linguistic manipulation; this can be judged by attempting a normal prose version of the line : “the wish to be alone exists beyond all this”, or “(Beyond all this) there is the wish to be alone (beyond all this)”.

When we explore deeper semantic details, the first line is not altogether unrelated to the title. *Wants* and *wish* share a core of meaning, both of them being kinds of ‘desire’ : ‘wants’ are desires for things which are conventionally regarded as measures of satisfaction or happiness; a ‘wish’ is an intensely felt desire for something rare and impracticable. *Wants*, *wish* and *desire* have a meaning alignment; they form the rungs of the same semantic ladder. Thus, partial synonymity is used as a cohesive device and a deep connection is established with the title. There is also an ambiguous second link through *this*. The use of the demonstrative pronoun *this* is puzzling; what does it point to ? The poet has mentioned nothing so far except the title, which is in the plural. There are two solutions : *all this* may stand for *wants* in which case the phrase has the stylistic meaning of expressing an attitude of exasperation towards the idea, i. e., ‘wants’. If *this* stands for *wants*, there is direct linking by grammatical means. But this may not sound plausible to some readers.

The poet may have used *all this* ‘indefinitely’ for the life of practical needs and necessities. In that case also the use is pejorative. The phrase is usually applied to something unpleasant or irritating to the speaker, or something which appears to be troublesome and trivial as in, *what’s all this about ?* In that case, we can work out the connection indirectly. A final point about the opening line. We must consider the posi-

tional and syntactic importance of the units. In the first line we are dealing with the main clause of the sentence. It consists of subject and adverbial. By inverting the order of elements the adverbial is placed in the front; this gives thematic importance to the idea expressed. On the other hand, *the wish to be alone*, being the subject of the clause, is syntactically most important. When we examine the construction further, we find that the adverbial assumes centrality because of fronting, while the subject is important by the very nature of the sentence structure. This shows us how the two contrasting thoughts presented so far are assigned relative importance by sentence construction : one of them superficial and the other on a deeper plane; one modifying and dispensable, the other, principal and essential.

Although I would not call the first line a sentence, yet the colon and what follows it indicates that the poet intends to give it an independent status as a statement. We can therefore say that in this poem the first clause constitutes the thesis. Let us now see how our experience proceeds by modification. It may be noticed here that the initial idea of economic wants has been modified by giving it a new turn through the suggestion of another and deeper want, namely, "the wish to be alone."

I think our familiarity with the general context will drive the point home to the reader. A major psychological problem of the contemporary common man (particularly middle-class) is his enslavement to social norms and expectations ; his public personality has suffocated his private self; he always finds himself in the 'presence' of others. But the urge to feel oneself as an individual, to pass time with oneself, is irrepressible and by implication necessary for a healthy psychological life. The problem is so generally felt that many poets have written about it. The statistical criteria of happy living have been ironically treated as illusory and misleading and the search for real solid self-experience continues.

We have seen how C. Day Lewis faces the issue in "The

Room". The king overwhelmed by his public roles becomes skeptical about his own 'reality' and therefore daily steps into a secret room in order to taste himself,

to be reassured

That under the royal action and abstraction

He lived in, he was real.

Here also, the surreality of deep-life is suggested by the prepositions *under* and *in*. Auden speaks about a citizen who played his roles very well and satisfied the norms laid down by the social psychologist. But was he happy and free? This question, comments the poet ironically, is irrelevant, because if there had been something wrong, we would have come to know ("The Unknown Citizen"). Dissatisfaction with public norms and values finds expression in Patrick Kavanagh's "The Hero" and Keith Douglas's, "The Deceased".

Returning to the main task, we must pay attention to the linking between the first and the second clause. In print, the colon following the first clause is unusual; we normally use a comma between a main clause and its subordinate adverbial clause. The comma means a short pause, close link and full dependence. The colon means longer pause, loose link and less semantic and syntactic dependence. We must absorb this relational meaning before studying the next clause. The poet wishes to treat the thoughts which follow as separate entities; at the same time they are grammatically and semantically subordinated to the thesis. The colon also indicates that we may have more than one item to consider.

Because of this punctuation, the next clause is to be viewed as a subordinate clause with a degree of independence. This means that the connective role of *however* is reduced, and it is contentivised with firm cohesion inside the clause. The word is not followed by a comma. It therefore means 'in whatever way or degree' as in, *He will never succeed, however hard he tries*. This is quite different from the use of *however* as a concessive connector as in, *He will not succeed. However, he*

is trying hard. We can get the feel of the second clause by placing a comma after *however* and then marking the contrast: "However, the sky grows dark with invitation-cards". In the new sentence, the connective meaning of *however*, is quite clear, and the tense in "grows" is restricted to 'actual present'.

As it stands, the second clause has a subordinate adverbial meaning expressing ineffectual intensification, but, for reasons explained above, it has a certain degree of independence and approximates, "The sky may grow dark with invitation-cards to a great degree". This subtle difference has significant implication. The verb- ending, as the above version suggests, indicates what I would call comprehensive present, meaning, 'this is what happens'.

The registral features of the vocabulary are also interesting, *The sky* and *dark* belong to the register of nature, and they do not accord well with *invitation-cards*, which through chain-association, suggests satisfaction of a certain kind of wants. Wherever there is registral discord, we can expect possibilities of metaphorical meaning. *Invitation-cards*, as already suggested, is in tune with one part of the antithetical theme; the other terms, *the sky* and *dark*, belong to an unrelated area of experience. We must therefore work out their metaphorical meaning. *Invitation-cards* suggest the world of social intercourse, inspiring a pleasant excitement accompanied by some strain rather than mental ease. *The sky* may then refer to the mental horizon. Darkening obstructs visibility. *Invitation-cards* which becomes slightly symbolic is to be seen as something serving to cloud the perception. Further explored, the metaphor leads us to visualise "the wish to be alone" as a star or light which continues to reach (and disturb) us despite flattering social engagements. The word *beyond* yields its full poetic meaning. The irony implied in the words should also be noted. The meaning of the adverb is tainted by the "darkening of the sky", which is not a welcome sign; it is like saying, *He is going to die however you poison him with sweets*. The next line is made rhetorically emphatic by the repetition of

however. The first person plural *we* is used in a generic sense : it stands for a class of people with whom the poet belongs; *we* is neither purely general nor purely structural as in, "We are mortal", and, "We can measure the temperature of a body", which is another way of saying, "the temperature of a body is measurable". *Sex* is the strongest word in the line; it is related to a basic emotion. In the natural process an emotion is experienced with a compulsive force, it impels one to physiological and physical action. Collocated with *sex* the word *directions* recovers some of the active meaning of the verb from which it is derived. But the prehead modifier suggests something opposite : printed directions are to be found in books, pamphlets and information-slips accompanying a patent medicine or tonic. Semantic exploration hints at a large body of 'literature' concerned with the 'arts' of love and sex which make or mar the contemporary culture and also, perhaps, at all kinds of prescriptions for a joyful life. The participial adjective also minimizes the active force of *follow* which in the context of *printed directions* would simply denote reading. Our age is a reading age; we tend to think that reading is a substitute for action or, probably, this is one of the limitations under which we live. I don't know whether the poet had an echo of *painted* in his subconscious; in that case the line receives one more layer of meaning with *follow* retaining its active meaning.

The clause expresses the second and central line of pursuit of satisfaction. It is followed by a third clause. All the words belong to the same register; however, *flagstaff* denotes something out of the ordinary. But the social prestige of the family which is sought to be projected is, after all, stereotyped. The definite article has a generic reference. Although the lexical verb indicates activity, the clause is in the passive voice. *The family* is the subject of the clause only on the surface; on a deeper level it is the 'affected' object and not the 'doer'. So a lack of genuine activity is again the final impression.

When we review the section comprising the three dependent clauses, we begin to see the meaning of punctuation (and the intonation it represents). The three clauses present the three kinds of satisfaction by conventional standards; the whole thing is to be placed by the side of a deeply felt and persisting want. Although grammatically subordinate to the first clause, the three clauses are given somewhat parallel status. If this is granted, we can perceive a double-reference in *all this*. The demonstrative points upward to the title and downward to the three clauses representing a single broad semantic section.

The repetition of the first line is highly effective : it is evocative and gives a haunting force to the feeling. We also get a physical impression of being surrounded from above and below by "the wish to be alone."

We begin the second stanza with a structure similar to the first : again a preposition indicating relative position, which also suggests depth. Some subtle variations should be carefully noted. *This* is replaced by *it*, and *all* has changed its position. Our affective response to *it* is colder and more detached than to *this*. *This* has a broader range of meaning with a possibility of animate reference and gives an idea of nearness, whereas *it* is confined to lifeless objects, near or far. The positional manipulation seems to say, "whichever way you arrange things, the wish to be alone comes through like a ray of light". Desire for oblivion diffuses like subsoil water—the 'spreadiveness' resulting from the absence of *the*. Although *runs* receives some active meaning from *beneath*, on the whole, the two most contentive words are *desire* and *oblivion*. *Oblivion* has an unpleasant flavour in modern usage, but it implies relaxation and calm (tastes which the contemporary city-dweller has lost). *Desire* falls into the pattern with *wants* and *wish* and *it all* links the two stanzas. We have a feeling of variety within symmetry. As in the first line, we switch back to common psychological register. In the depth of our 'being', there is a tendency to slip into one's self, to withdraw from public involvement.

Again, the initial thought of the second stanza is modified by 'concessive' additions, this time by a single prepositional phrase. *Artful* is not the same as *artistic* : it has a suggestion of mere ingenuity. 'Tension' is also an unwelcome state, although it keeps the mind 'excited'. "Artful tensions" might also be an allusion to the modern literary critic's insistence on the presence of tension between opposite or disparate elements in a work of art. The mental state facilitated by cleverly arranged engagements during the year cannot destroy the desire for oblivion. The means for a happy life devised by the modern society cannot expel the urge for a different kind of satisfaction. These means are mentioned first in plain language ("The life insurance"), and then metaphorically. *Fertility rites* belongs to the field of social anthropology in which three components should be distinguished : renewal of life, religious attitude, and primitivism. The participial adjective, *tabled*, and the next line, offer a clue to the metaphor. *Tabled* probably means arranged on the table. As in primitive days, the modern men and women perform the rites to keep young at a table in front of a mirror; they approach the act with religious seriousness.

The phrase is a comment on the 'cheap' commercialised methods devised by modern society for the retention of life and vitality. The word *costly*, used in a literal sense, continues this idea. The penultimate line I think is appositive, that is, it describes in general but concrete terms, the true nature of life insurance and "the tabled fertility rites"; they represent an expensive act of looking away from death. The idea of 'looking away' is presented in concrete terms by the use of nouns : *aversion* is strongly connotative, meaning 'a strong desire to avoid because of dislike; and *eyes* is a concrete noun associated with the most important of our senses. *Death* is emotive; it provides the climax to a series of noun phrases; thereafter, in the last line we revert to the first thought.

There is no space to discuss the design of the poem in detail, but it embodies a high degree of artistic organisation.

The two sentences are symmetrical, but within each, there are subtle variations. Each stanza opens with a fronted prepositional phrase which is followed by a clause; but within the phrase and also within the clauses there is variation. The main statement in the first stanza is qualified by these clauses, which by creative use of punctuation and grammar are given a certain degree of importance. In the second stanza the main statement is qualified by three units, but they are three noun phrases within a prepositional phrase. Each stanza contains an emotive peak, but the positioning is different. The full complexity of the design can be gathered from the grammatical and semantic pictures which follow the detailed analysis of the poem.

Now I come to the total impact of the poem in terms of certain parameters. This is very important for the experience and enjoyment of a poem. First an analogy. The psychological impact of a concrete object is based on certain concepts such as volume, density, shape, weight, etc. In order to judge these things, we take measurements and calculate ratios. In ordinary perception these things are done quite simply and quickly as information is conveyed by the senses. A poem can also be assessed in a similar manner. But a poem is not a material object. We can say little about its total impact on the basis of the space it occupies. We must consider grammatical and semantic categories statistically to make an overall assessment. This assessment is not a judgement of value; it pertains to the nature of the poem. However, considered in relation to its appropriateness to the theme, it can be used to evaluate the merit of a poem.

First we shall see whether the linguistic style of the poem is verbal or nominal; each has a different kind of impact. In the poem we are studying there are 73 words : 45 are content words and 28 are structure words; the ratio is roughly 3:2. Considering that English, an analytical language, normally has a fair proportion of structure words, we can say that "Wants" is fairly contentive. The small proportion of bound morphemes, which are generally devoid of lexical meaning, also

strengthens the feeling of contentivity. When nouns and verbs are compared, nouns are by far more numerous; there are 21 nouns and 7 lexical verbs; 5 verbs are finite and 2 non-finite. This proves that the poem has a nominal style. The effect of nominality is further enhanced by the low semantic content and non-active nature of the verbs : *grow, follow, photograph* and *run*. *Grow, follow* and *run* are not used in their active sense, and *photograph*, converted from a noun, retains its static nature. Nouns are generally static and picturesque in contrast with verbs, which indicate activity. Nouns and verbs offer two distinct kinds of experience : one is expressive of being, the other of becoming.

The nominal style of the poem gives it a tableau effect; it embodies awareness of positions rather than motion, of picture rather than drama, of fixity rather than flow. By contrast verbal style attacks our consciousness with activity and change; we experience things acting and moving. But mere number is not enough; copulas and inchoative verbs like *be, get, grow, resemble*, and *appear* serve only to strengthen the nominal effect; not only the number, but the semantic nature of the verbs used is also important. For contrast, consider the following poem by Osbert Sitwell in which winter is presented in terms of activities.

Winter the Huntsman

Through his iron glades
Rides Winter the Huntsman.
All colour fades
As his horn is heard sighing.

Far through the forest
His wild hooves crash and thunder
Till many a mighty branch
Is torn asunder.

Turning to the semantic classes, we observe that there are 14 affective terms and 31 denotative. Only 2 connotative words

are related to strong feeling; this shows a gentle turning of emotion and a middle affective level. The abundance of generic terms points to what we may call a 'generic poem', that is, a poem expressing the theme in terms of experience of classes of being. The lines also move at a middle level of concretisation : there are 41 concrete-2 terms. It is interesting to compare this poem with Wordsworth's sonnet, "The World is Too Much With Us", in which the experience of nature is aroused in more concrete terms—terms which I would mark concrete-1 : *Nature, This Sea, (her) bosom, the moon, the winds (that will be howling at all hours), Great God, this pleasant lea, Proteus, Triton, bares, howling, up-gathered, suckled.*

Notes

1. Randolph Quirk, S. Greenbaum, G. N. Leech and J. Svartvik, *A Grammar of Contemporary English* (London : Longman, 1972).
2. Otto Ewert, "The Attitudinal Character of Emotion", in *Feeling and Emotion*, ed. Magda B. Arnold (New York : Academic Press, 1970), pp. 233-36.
3. Explained in George A. Miller, "Wundt", *Psychology : The Science of Mental Life* (New York : Harper and Row, 1962).
4. Stephen Ullmann, *Semantics : An Introduction to the Science of Meaning* (Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 1972), pp. 118-119.



CHAPTER-3

ANALYTICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Analytical Interpretations

The linguistic analyses of Philip Larkin's "Wants", attempted in the last chapter, are fairly detailed. It is conceivable, however, that some of the details included may have contributed nothing, or very little, to the interpretation. Still a scientific study of a poem must make an exhaustive analysis (subject to the degree of delicacy chosen) in order to discover every source of aesthetic experience. The task of the interpreter is to explicate the experience of a competent reader of poetry. In practical situations however, such as teaching, literary talks, or critical discussion, interpretation can be based on rough mental analysis; this skill comes from experience. What is of fundamental importance is the new approach suggested in this work. It calls for every interpretation to be preceded by a linguistic analysis of the poem under study. Often what appear to be irrelevant or isolated linguistic features, e. g., number inflexions, prefixes, or modals, after proper analysis, turn out to be parts of intricate local or general patterning corresponding with the deep meaning.

In this part I propose to present brief interpretations of some more contemporary verse without supplying detailed analyses. Nevertheless, my discussion is based on such analyses done mentally. The interpretations are based on the model discussed earlier.

Sylvia Plath

Text

Mushrooms

Overnight, very
Whitely, discreetly,
Very quietly

(88)

Our toes, our noses
Take hold on the loam,
Acquire the air.

Nobody sees us,
Stops us, betrays us;
The small grains make room.

Soft fists insist on
Heaving the needles,
The leafy bedding,

Even the paving.
Our hammers, our rams,
Earless and eyeless,

Perfectly voiceless,
Widen the crannies,
Shoulder through holes. We

Diet on water,
On crumbs of shadow,
Bland-mannerd, asking

Little or nothing.
So many of us !
So many of us !

We are shelves, we are
Tables, we are meek,
We are edible,

Nudgers and shovers,
In spite of ourselves.
Our kind multiplies :

We shall by morning
Inherit the earth.
Our foot's in the door.

Interpretation

The experience begins with a general idea of an interesting form of vegetation which is marked from the rest of the plant kingdom by certain peculiarities of shape and growth. We need not refer to the strict botanical definition. Thoughts of multiplicity and rapid growth are associated with the word. A mild feeling of dislike or fear may be present at the strangeness and secretiveness of this kind of growth.

What we meet in the first stanza are the tentacles of a sentence, a series of short adverbs of time and manner. None of the words have strong connotations. *Whitely* dimly and vaguely excites the sense of sight, and *discreetly* suggests a conscious calculating will. When the stanza ends we have a feeling of uneasiness and mystification, as if a dark being has mysteriously reached its paws towards us. The periodic sentence here is extremely effective. By contrast, the second stanza is full of concrete words. The pronoun indicates the projection of the consciousness of 'mushrooms', and we begin to experience the 'thing' in a new way. We get the link with the title, the point is now clearer : we hear the voice of the dark will of mushrooms. The vocabulary belongs to the region of animal growth and struggle for survival. In mushrooms, we now see creatures half-hidden, but advancing : we see the advancing parts—"our toes", "our noses".

What we have called thesis is complete. The general idea of mushrooms has been formulated in the thought of quietly, calculatedly advancing creatures. We shall see how this thought is developed, specified, expanded, in the rest of the poem.

In the third stanza we are also made aware of a shadowy presence. The verbs create an impression of the irresistible advance of a horde. The negative indefinite pronoun is nearly empty in content, but it deepens the feeling of mystery. The pronoun *us* referring to "mushrooms" is in the object position; we have not so far met the word as the subject of an active verb : we have an awareness of their working, but not their

identity. "The small grains" are said "to make room" for the advancing horde. "Grain" is already 'a small object'; it is further modified by an adjective.

We are assailed by smallness and partness in numerous forms : toes, noses, grains. All the words are plural in number. The plural inflexion begins to take hold on our mind. Note that the use of these words is not in synecdoche as in *five hands will be needed for the job*. Such words usually appear in prepositional phrases with instrumental roles : *he touched it with his toes*. Their use as the subject of the verbs which normally take animate nouns creates an eerie effect. We have here a blend of science and horror fiction in their quintessence.

In stanza 4, we return to the centrality of the mysterious presence at work. A small part of the human body is introduced as the subject of a verb which normally takes a human noun. *Heaving* implies action on a heavy object by a strong force, yet the noun subject is modified by *soft*, and the object of *heaving* is *needles* and *the leafy beddings*. We are made to wait, to pause, and then the surprise, *Even the paving*.

Stanza 5 introduces a new element. *Hammers and rams* emphatically belong to a different category of experience : they imply mechanical force, relentless and inconsiderate. It is remarkable that things which are used as instruments or means are endowed with a will and energy of their own. A powerful weapon is forged by the poet with the help of a simple grammatico-semantic manipulation. It can be formulated thus : A does B with C, is regularly changed into C does B, where C may be either a part of the human body (*toes, fists*), or a tool (*hammers, rams*). The un-humanity and inhumanity of the little things is further enhanced in denying the little things human instruments of perception by repeated use of the negative suffix—*less*. A wierd effect is created by denying ear, eye, and voice where they do not properly belong—in

'hammers' and 'rams'. And yet they "widen the crannies and shoulder through holes."

We have nearly forgotten the title and are fearfully aware of a strange being in terms of small parts with a mysterious, ruthless will to survive. Line 18 completes one section of the poem and opens another. The first section has built a new feeling of awe and mystification, recreating the personality of mushrooms as mysterious beings known only by the working of their limbs and united by the indomitable will to advance. The effect arises from three principal means. First, the use of plural nouns which share the feature 'small or tiny' ; *toes, noses, grains, needles, hammers, rams, crannies, holes*. These nouns create a feeling of being surrounded by numerous small things. The nouns fall into two classes : those which indicate limbs : *toes, noses, hammers, rams* (from the context, and helped by our experience, we gather that the last two are also parts of the creature, although this does not exclude the idea of mechanical force, which being the chief meaning, gives a fresh colouring to the thought) and those which denote tiny inanimate objects : *crannies, holes*. Second, these limb-nouns are used as the subject of the verbs which require human nouns :

(We take hold of the loam with our toes)

Our toes take hold of the loam.

(We acquire the air with our noses)

Our noses acquire the air.

and so on. Third, the sentence structure including morphology, and the cutting of grammatical structure with verse and stanza boundaries, reinforce the idea of small ominous beings and their 'tentacular' advance.

The last word of the 6th stanza is *We*. Here the things declare themselves pronominally. *We* is the first word of a sentence which is completed in the next stanza. This creates suspense for a moment. The repeated use of the first person plural (*our, us, we*) is not without significance; it gives the

reader an impression of a highly cohesive collective being; we are aware of 'mushrooms' as a tenacious plural personality. The use of the pronominal forms also helps avoid that degree of concreteness which would mar the intended effect. Proper nouns seldom arouse mystery unless they are unfamiliar and strange; they are concrete in the first degree; they impact on our consciousness with an immediacy. But pronouns imply a distance, and when a noun is replaced by a pronoun, the outlines become less clear, admitting darker shades. This can be readily verified by restoring the noun, e. g., *Mushrooms diet on water.*

In stanzas 7 to 10 the mood of frightening strangeness is maintained. The life of mushrooms is primarily depicted in terms associated with human society—even polite society: *Dite, crumbs, bland-mannered, asking/Little or nothing, shelves, tables, meek, edible, nudgers, 'shovers.* Finally, the cumulative effect (with the strange threatening creatures—mushrooms—speaking directly) is that of an obnoxious, multiple-being, utterly strange yet human enough to advance like a huge army and occupy the earth :

We shall by morning
Inherit the earth
Our foot's in the door.

It is noticeable that the language of the last stanza is entirely that of civilised human society with a 'prophetic' touch.

Louis Simpson

Text

As birds are Fitted to the Boughs
As birds ars fitted to the boughs
That blossom on the tree
And whisper when the south wind blows—
So was my love to me.

And still she blossoms in my mind
 And whispers softly, though
 The clouds are fitted to the wind,
 The wind is to the snow.

Interpretation

The title as it stands is part of a sentence, and calls attention to a grammatical element, correlative subordination: the manner or way in which something exists. We are in the field of nature, birds and boughs, and precisely due to this, the word *fitted* becomes conspicuous; used in the passive voice, the word arouses ideas about machines and their parts. Fitting is a skilful and accurate task which ensures the satisfactory functioning of a machine. The best in machine and nature has been brought together. We cannot form any definite idea from part of an adverbial clause, but the vividness of the image is beyond question.

The first stanza gives us a joyous picture of a 'system' comprising birds, tree, and the poet's love. We must interpret *love* in a double reference, as an emotion and as the beloved. In the adverbial clause, *birds* is distinguished from other nouns by two semantic features: it refers to an animate object, a creature, and it has an exterior relationship to tree; *boughs* and *trees* have a 'part-whole' relationship, and *south-wind* is marked by the feature 'inanimate'. Birds are not permanently fixed to boughs; they may fly away, but boughs cannot detach themselves from the tree. The plural ending of *birds* contrasts with the singular ending of *love*. The comparison made between *birds* and *my love*—"As birds are fitted...", "So was my love..."—adds an idea or feeling of plurality to love, leading the reader to experience *love* as a multiple, pervasive emotion. It can also, I think, evoke the image of the beloved held in embrace. 'Love' is conceived as a complex of feelings, sensations, and ideas, like a flock of birds.

All the words used in the first stanza have sweetly pleasant connotations except *fitting*. This word, apart from its meaning explained above, acts as a check on suggestions of sentiment-

talities; it imparts toughness to the otherwise gentle airy emotion reminiscent of Romantic lyricism. The tense of the verb in the last line shows the poet is trying to recreate a past experience by comparing it with a natural scene which can be directly conceived and felt.

One thing, however, seems disproportionate : the poet is comparing his love with birds in a certain setting, but he does not mention any attributes of birds, and devotes two lines to dilate upon boughs. If we read the poem feelingly, we are bound to be struck by this fact. It may, or may not, assume significance later.

And in the beginning of stanza 2, defines the main linking. It is additive : a second unit of experience is being placed next to the first. The thoughts of the two stanzas should be viewed in this light. But there are also other kinds of links. *Still* emphatically adds a time relationship : "Something was in the past; it continues even in the present in some form". The pronoun *she* restricts its antecedent to 'the beloved'. *Blossom* (a verb), collocating with *she*, gives a metaphorical meaning reinforced by the phrase *in my mind*. The poet has led us to a realisation not logically implied in the first stanza; because it is "boughs that blossom on the tree", "and whisper when the south wind blows"—and not "birds", and we are expected to equate "she" with "birds" and not with "boughs". In my view it is this discrepancy which brings the thought of the poem to a flowering. The application of "blossom" and "whisper" to "she" leads us to an idea of a transformation or metamorphosis of "my love". In what sense ? In the absence of the lady, love has become internalised; she has become an integral part of the poet, and flowers within him in the form of a thousand memories. The word *softly* has been used significantly. The adverbial clauses in the second stanza contain words with unfavourable connotations indicating a reversal in the setting.

The poet, concretely and pleasurably, has led us to the

(95)

realisation of two states of love : physical and mental, and he has made us feel the difference, as well as the continuity, between the two. The two frames of reference are contrasted semantically and grammatically.

Elizabeth Jennings

Text

In the Night

Out of my window late at night I gape
And see the stars but do not watch them really,
And hear the trains but do not listen clearly;
Inside my mind I turn about to keep
Myself awake, yet am not there entirely.
Something of me is out in the dark landscape.

How much am I then what I think, how much what I feel ?
How much the eye that seems to keep stars straight ?
Do I control what I can contemplate
Or is it my vision that's amenable ?
I turn in my mind, my mind is a room whose wall
I can see the top of but never completely scale.

All that I love is, like the night, outside,
Good to be gazed at, looking as if it could
With a simple gesture be brought inside my head
Or in my heart, but my thoughts about it divide
Me from my object. Now deep in my bed
I turn and the world turns on the other side.

Interpretation

The title is a temporal phrase. It suggests a broad and indefinite area of experience limited only by the indication that something takes place in the night. But titles of poems deserve a little more attention. It is possible to attach a strictly locative meaning to the preposition as in, *the book is in the box*. In that case *Night* may assume metaphorical meaning.

The first sentence restricts the reference. The idea of the title is being tied down to a specific situation : we are given a place, and a time, and a speaker who is the poetess herself. Very few of the words used can be called connotative. It is a poem conceived in the intellect. Logical faculty is active in making distinctions between meanings : *see : watch; hear : listen*; adverbial modification also has a logical tang : *really, clearly, entirely*. The second sentence is in the nature of a logical conclusion, negatively made emphatic in two ways : there is no logical adverbial such as "to conclude", and the meaning and use of words do not accord with logical discourse. The sentence gives expression to a mildly mystical experience.

A weak (not pejoratively speaking) mixture of intellectual and affective language is continued in the second stanza. We have a series of questions intended partly to deepen the wonder, and partly as a dialectical device. The first question deserves attention : 'How much am I then what I think, how much what I feel ?' *Think* and *feel* are both used; *then* is used in a logical sense. In the other questions also, the words are mainly denotative.

Again, the last sentence of stanza 2 is a conclusion; a locative preposition and the nouns *room, wall, top*, concretise the idea of the mind as a prison and a hindrance. The self is turning inside the mind; a feeling of unease is gently suggested. The disquite is caused by the self's inability to be united with that part which is outside : the mystical 'natural' counterpart of the human self. A deep division is suggested. The paradox of the self being inside and not inside the mind, is not fully resolved.

The last stanza is explanatory. The object of love is not defined in concrete terms; logically it cannot be. But we are aware of the schism. A strongly connotative word is now used. The object of love is not any person, but a profound "something" in nature which intellectually, or emotionally ("head",

“heart”) cannot be assimilated due to the barrier of the mind itself. So the lover and the loved, the subject and the object, the human and the natural selves, remain back to back.

What remains impressed on the mind is the straining and the mood, the awareness. This poem is, I think, a good example of contemporary consciousness and poetic method. The syntax is normal; with only minor deviations, if any. The vocabulary is largely denotative and intellectual; the structure of the poem is logical. It is the subtlety of craftsmanship which is important. The affective state is created with great skill and, finally, the writer has successfully imbued a basic dilemma of man with aesthetic experience. If anywhere, a poetic emotion has flowered on logical substructure in this poem.

Thomas Blackburn

Text

Hospital for Defectives

By your unnumbered charities
 A miracle disclose,
 Lord of the Images, whose love,
 The eyelid and the rose
 Takes for a language, and today
 Tell to me what is said
 By these men in a turnip field
 And their unleavened bread.
 For all things seem to figure out
 The stirrings of your heart,
 And two men pick the turnips up
 And two men pull the cart;
 And yet between the four of them
 No word is ever said
 Because the yeast was not put in
 Which makes the human bread
 But three men stare on vacancy
 And one man strokes his knees;
 What is the meaning to be found

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In such dark vowels as these ?
 Lord of the Images, whose love,
 The eyelid and the rose
 Takes for a metaphor, today,
 Beneath the warder's blows,
 The unleavened man did not cry out
 Or turn his face away,
 Through such men in a turnip field
 What is it that you say ?

Interpretation

A hospital for defectives is a painful sight in the modern society. We pity its inmates, have a sense of fear at the imperfect blending of human elements, and are overcome by a feeling of helplessness. A bleak picture of a building and the strange inexplicable behaviour of defectives arises in the mind. The title itself is common and unpoetical and we can have no hunch which way the poet is going to take us, how this initial experience will be moulded, or what attitude the poet will adopt towards the subject.

The first stanza answers nearly all our questions; it gives a definite direction to the topic. The vocabulary and grammar take us in the domain of religion. The invocative sentence, universal present tense, and the words *charities*, *miracle*, *Lord*, *love* (in the sense of 'agape'), *unleavened bread*—all of these features associate the language with that of the Bible and religious supplication. The language creates the mood. The poet has generated a solemn, religious, mystified attitude to the subject, excluding other kinds of thought.

If we examine the language more closely, we can discern the style of invocation of epic poetry which possessed a broad religious framework. The poet often prays to gods to give him vision and expressive power. We can see examples of such invocation in *The Paradise Lost*.

Say first, for Heav'n hides nothing from thy view
 Nor the deep tract of Hell, say first what cause
 Mov'd our grand Parents in that happy state

The point is that the poem's thought is to be interpreted in general religious terms rather than in a strict Christian framework. It is the wonder and prayer of the 'unsophisticated' man in the face of a natural puzzle. But it is the Poet with the touch of a prophet who is in search of God's language. What may be called the register of language (*Images, language, What is said*) is introduced as an integral element in the poem.

Grammatically, *whose love* is the subject of *takes*, the semantic nature of the verb impelling the reader to conceive God's love as an active principle. The non-normal word-order highlights *the eyelid and the rose* as the images of love. But if we tend to overlook grammatical agreement (and this might be intended) we might paraphrase the idea as, **"The eyelid and the rose takes God's love for a language."* In that case the eyelid and the rose become more important, and their movements and beauty are seen as showering the love of God. The adverb of time (*today*) also deserves attention; the sight has moved the poet so much that he thinks the hour of revelation has arrived.

God has been invoked as "Lord of *the Images*", not simply Lord of "images". *The* here is homophoric—Images are conceived like Platonic Ideas as the eternal syllables of divine communication. God may be invoked in other terms: "Almighty", "Creator and Destroyer", "Lord of living and dead", but the poet here is concerned with God, the master of poetic language. The poet is not inquisitive about what the defectives may say, but with the phenomenon itself as the language of God, as in *What does this sentence say?* He wants to know the hidden meaning of this kind of life in God's scheme. The deviant use of "their unleavened bread" as the deep-structure subject of "say" shows this clearly.

The second stanza opens with a logical linker, leading to the grounds for the supplication in the first stanza. The use of *seem* is significant; it gives an impressionistic modality to the verb *to figure out*. In the context of what follows, *figure*

out takes on a concrete meaning. All things, through their behaviour (not speech), convey a super-meaning. The world is the language of God. I am reminded of the theologian's statement : "God's utterance of himself in himself is God, the Word, outside himself is this world", *Stirring* and *heart* have connotative meaning. The poet reinforces the affective source of divine working. The use of *and* repeatedly in three lines as a loose connector strongly echoes the biblical style; *And* is not the right connective in the third line, but its use is highly effective. We see the defectives engaged in what may be called primary tasks, that is, those we have in common with the primitive man and the world of the Bible. The sentence is held together by a system of connectors : *for... and...(and) yet...because*. With the help of these, we work out the relationship among different sections. *For* connects upwards. *And* produces a striking effect by sudden juxtaposition of an image which should be reached after some retiocination : "All things articulate Your moods. Therefore the following activity must have some meaning", or something to that effect. *Yet* adds the idea of something unusual or unexpected and *because* introduces the reason as far as human mind can go. The idea of *unleavened bread* is repeated. The language of these lines is highly figurative. This we gather from the discrepancy of registers. The lines reach symbolic level ("yeast", "human bread"), and the human explanation boils down to a vague mood of half-comprehension—that something is missing, but we can't say why or what for.

In lines 17-18 again a couple of queer details are given : *stare* is unexpectedly collocated with *vacancy* (*stare* also denotes a striking posture of the eye); stroking of the knees also seems futile and puzzling. These details are followed within the same sentence by the question posed differently in the first stanza. Once again we are face to face with the insurmountable barrier. Its mystery is conveyed by the use of "dark vowels".

The final stanza repeats the idea of the first with significant

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modifications. Instead of *language* we now have more specific *metaphor*. Another detail is added and then the question is put directly :

Through such men in a turnip field
What is it that you say?

The poem achieves a haunting evocative quality through repetition, but it is not refrain-like; by skilful variation of sentence structure, the thought is rendered dynamic, though only this side of the Great Barrier. But the nature of the problem is clear. God's love uses the eyelid and the rose as its metaphors, they are images of God's benignity. But the defectives embody a baffling language. What kind of love or hatred does God convey through them. We are reminded of Yeats. He is also puzzled by the moral disintegration of the world in "The Second Coming", but he does not stop at that; he ventures to accommodate the phenomenon in his system of thought and presents a partial explanation, although, as suggested by the use of *what* ("what rough beast"), it is not a complete resolution.

Langston Hughes

Text

Border Line

I used to wonder
About living and dying—
I think the difference lies
Between tears and crying

I used to wonder
About here and there—
I think the distance
Is nowhere.

Interpretation

The title evokes the idea of a line of demarcation between two regions—a line along which two areas end. The meaning may be conceived in two ways : a line separating two things,

or one along which two things meet with an element of uncertainty. Line is a geometrical concept; it does not suggest any concrete object as does *boundary wall*. The phrase is denotative.

The first statement specifies the idea indirectly. The word is not repeated and there is no logical or other kind of linking. Two states are mentioned—"living and dying", "tears and crying", which imply some kind of border line. The word "difference" is very distantly related to border line in meaning. The effect of this kind of vague and remote connection with the title needs be understood. There are many other things in the stanza which either blur a clear demarcation or have an element of vagueness in them. We have the preposition *about* which contrasted with *into* or *on* indicates an unclear relation. *Lies* is only a copula, devoid of concrete meaning, and *living* and *dying* are made less dissimilar by the ending *ing*, which indicates continuity. Instead, *life* and *death* being nouns, would convey a clearer impression of difference. States of "tears" and "crying" have much in common; we might say that the latter is only the culmination of the former. The use of *I* and *I think*, which is stronger here than in normal contexts, confines the thought within subjective opinion and feeling.

There is not much difference between the two stanzas. A good deal of the first stanza is repeated in the second. *Here* and *there* are less substantial words for *living* and *dying*. Only to link up the poem with the title by the tail, spatial terms are used : *here*, *there*, *distance*, *nowhere*. The sting comes in the last line. First, the division of lines renders *nowhere* prominent. From its initial position *I* also receives emphasis. Second, to get the full effect, *nowhere* should be parsed as a noun—not as an adverb. This will make a minor but important difference. The difference is illustrated by the following sentences :

The man is John.

The man is there.

In the first sentence "the man" is identified as "John"; in the second, his position is indicated. *Nowhere* can be fitted into either pattern. When we take the first, as suggested, "distance" is identified as "nowhere". A noun is normally more concrete than a verb. So, grammatically we get a concrete idea of distance, but when we ponder the negative meaning of the term, we discover with surprise that it is totally illusory, a most abstract construct of the mind.

The poem itself creates a powerful impression of insubstantiality. Nearly half the words, in addition to the long inflexional ending, *-ing*, are empty or structural. Of the remaining words, only *tears* can be called fully concrete. *Living*, *dying*, *crying*, and *wonder* have a second degree of concreteness; *difference* and *distance* are inferential, and the rest are pronouns. I believe when we praise the poem for having accomplished its objective, we have in our sub-conscious the kind of effect I have explained—unreality of the "border line" between life and death. We have noticed how this is a recurring theme in contemporary poetry.



CHAPTER-4

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Endless discussion has been going on about the nature and function of poetry since very ancient days. The issue can by no means be regarded as settled. Should study and interpretation of poems, then, wait until a definite answer to this central problem is found? This means waiting for several centuries, if not for ever. Science has continued to make experiments and draw conclusions without first being absolutely clear about the true nature and function of time and space. There must be a way out. We can approach poetry empirically by taking into account certain obvious facts about poems. First of all a poem is a speech-event, although of a special type, which takes place linearly in time, or both in time and space. Like any other verbal message, it seeks to communicate some meaning or experience. The poet has been caught by some novel mood or thought which he believes carries a value from the human or cultural point of view, and he wants to share it with other members of the community. The message, which has a linguistic design, imparts a certain kind of satisfaction, which we agree to call 'aesthetic'.

As a message, a poem involves the speaker, the hearer, and the code; as linguistic behaviour, it is interpreted in terms of its context of situation—the two aspects are interrelated. I have emphasized the importance of the linguistic concept of context of situation. This principle, if applied systematically, can have a wholesome controlling effect on the needless, often irrelevant, cerebrations of the literary scholar (who has a tendency to talk a great deal about a poem without coming to grips with the encoded message). The context is important insofar as it contributes to our understanding, but not for its own sake. For those sonnets of Shakespeare which are addressed to

a "young man", the Elizabethan ideals of friendship form an element of the context; they are needless for many other poems of his. To understand Hopkins's poetry, we must know that he was a Jesuit; his treatment of Nature is fundamentally different from that of Wordsworth; many words used by him bear specific theological signification, or refer to some Catholic dogma.

In a working linguistic model for the study of poetry, a consideration of the context of situation is necessary. This can be easily shown by studying contemporary poetry. As explained earlier, the reader of contemporary verse shares a good deal of the socio-economic milieu with the poet. He can gather the exophoric references easily, and has no difficulty in recognising the topical nuances and connotations of words. For most contemporary poems, we need a general context, since highly philosophical, esoteric or technically complex poetry, which requires special or individual contexts, is no longer in vogue.

Next, we come to the main task; the analysis and interpretation of a poem. We should bear in mind the fact that interpreting a poem is not the same as interpreting a legal clause; the latter is a purely intellectual activity concerned with explicating the meaning and implications of a text. But 'meaning' in relation to poetry includes experience: a poem happens. A poem, as a stimulus, triggers off a novel experience which is a complex of ideas, feelings, moods and attitudes. The total meaning or effect of a poem is contributed by its complex linguistic organisation studied in its appropriate context. The poet recreates the experience by means of linguistic manipulations, by handling the rules of the language with some degree of originality. Hence the need to study and analyse the linguistic structure of a poem. This does not mean that analysis must precede experience, that we cannot experience a poem without first analysing it. Competent readers have always understood poetry without taking it to pieces just as native speakers of a language can understand it easily without consciously applying the rules of grammar. What is being

contended here is that, in order to explain the communicative effect of a poem *explicitly*, we must analyse it linguistically. Even a minor linguistic feature may have far-reaching implications in terms of the kind of experience being aroused. Let us consider some words and phrases : *the daffodils*, *to the daisy*, *snowdrop*—all these have been used for titles of poems. The first is marked by the use of *the* and the plural inflexion. Both these are structural items and have no referential meaning, but they are highly significant in determining the type of experience the poet seeks to convey. The determiner may point either to a genus in which case the 'feel' of class-characteristics is added, or to a definite group of daffodils seen by the poet at a certain spot. The plural ending conveys the idea of crowdedness and leaves little scope for contrast with the background. On the other hand *snowdrop* has no structural accoutrements; it arouses a single concrete image and has the look of a proper noun. This is so because Ted Hughes, in the poem of that title, wishes to convey the impression of an individual flower fighting the rigours of cold with grim determination. The result of these minor grammatical differences is that the impact produced by the two items is qualitatively different. The third item stands midway between the two. It refers to the genus, but the singular form enables the poet to infuse the idea with the force of a personality.

I have emphasized the linguistic design of a poem as the key to its understanding. This design is of a dynamic type. The dynamic nature of a poem must be conceded, since our experience of a poem assumes shape or grows as a result of a series of linguistic strokes, turns and pushes, cutting and clipping. This concept is most important when it comes to interpretation.

However, for analysis, we can conceive of a poem as falling into three main parts : title, thesis, and body. But the model I have proposed represents the psychological reality : this is how we *naturally* experience a poem. Given the proper context, the first linguistic stimulus comes from the title. I

suggest the meaning of the title should be taken at its face value, that is, the conventional denotation and connotation of the words, with of course, a close look at the grammar. This is what happens when a common reader confronts a poem. We start on the surface of the language system, more or less, in the same way as with other forms of discourse. The title may present a wide or very specific semantic chunk, as it were : "God", "Futility", "Youth and Age", "Easter 1916", "Rimbaud". Because of its brevity, lack of exact context, and the creative nature of verbal communication (ignoring the marginal cases of phatic communion and ceremonial exchanges), the title does not ensure a definite direction, although it raises a wide range of expectations.

The next part, the thesis, may or may not fulfil some of the expectations. It may broach a new subject apparently unrelated to the title. Even where there is no perceptible link between the title and the thesis, we insist on interpreting the lines as text, and continue our reading. The last part, the body, is generally in continuation with the thesis and grows dynamically. Each word and clause that is added, brings the 'thought' of the poem into clearer and more specific shape. This whole process can be explained by an analogy with sculpture. The sculptor takes a block of stone and begins shearing and cutting it; gradually, definite lines begin to appear until finally, the rough block assumes a 'beautiful' shape. We watch the final fruit of the artist's labours as a static figure, but if you observe the fascinating earlier procedure, it will be like experiencing a poem. This is, however, a rough approximation. The poetic process is more complex and varied. As we have seen, the poet may begin with a small piece of semantic material, so to speak, and both chip it and add to it. All this is achieved by a dynamic modulation of the initial thought by linguistic means. Thus we begin with a familiar experience and end up by gaining a new one.

Once a poem has been experienced, one can visualise it as

a whole to assess its net effect along certain axes, e. g., substantiality, emotivity. Apart from the experience of a poem, we have to take into account its net psychological impact, which can be broken up into components correlatable with certain linguistic aspects of the design, e. g., the proportion of nouns or adjectives. This is done with the help of what I have called 'linguistic pictures'.

The model I have presented fulfils certain objectives. First, it attempts a systematic account of the competence of a successful reader of poetry; it makes the ability of such a reader explicit. Not every reader, however, is able to derive the maximum that the design of a poem can yield. Second, this model therefore enables even the common reader to learn how to experience a poem in its entirety. Third, practical criticism and interpretation are provided with a solid basis and techniques for the study of poetry. The model offers a good check on purely subjective and impressionistic criticism and interpretation. Once the sound linguistic facts of a poem are accepted as the basis of its 'delights', no one will be able to argue like Goldsmith's village master :

In arguing too, the parson own'd his skill,
For e'en though vanquish'd, he could argue still.

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APPENDICES

APPENDICES

APPENDIX-I

METAPHOR : ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION*

The linguistic device¹ called 'metaphor' has been the subject of wide discussion since ancient times. According to Aristotle "metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy."² He gives examples of each kind. Analysing the last type, Aristotle says if there are four terms proportionally related then an analogical metaphor can be formed by combining two of them in the following manner :

A	B	C	D
Dionysus:	Cup::	Aries:	Shield

'The cup accordingly will be metaphorically described as the 'shield of Dionysus' ($D+A$), and the shield as the 'cup of Aries ($B+C$).'³

In *Poetics*, the analogical metaphor is recognised as the most 'taking' kind. The discussion of metaphor in *Poetics* implies that Aristotle regarded it as a beautifying addition to language. In *Rhetoric*, the emphasis is on persuasion. Metaphor is a distinctive characteristic of poetry; it may be used in logical and rhetorical prose for special effect.

The classical view of metaphor is derived from Aristotle. It regards metaphor as extraneous to the basic meaning of an expression : something added as adornment. The view that simile and metaphor, in ultimate analysis, are the same is also traceable to Aristotle. The simile is a kind of metaphor, the difference being 'but slight'.⁴

*This is a slightly expanded version of my paper with the same title published in *Indian Linguistics* vol 43, 3-4, September; December 1982.

From an analytical point of view, a significant contribution is made by Quintilian, although the basic assumptions remain the same. Quintilian distinguishes four kinds of metaphorical transference :

- (1) inanimate to animate
- (2) animate to inanimate
- (3) inanimate to inanimate
- (4) animate to animate⁵

Philosophically speaking, Plato can be regarded as the source of the Romantic view of language and metaphor. "One of the principles of art most clearly enunciated by Plato is that of organic unity."⁶ This has the implication that figurative language should not be something which is added as an ornament to the thought. Plato views rhetoric from a moral standpoint. The Socratic principle underlying the *Phaedrus* is that "virtue is knowledge, and springing from this, the main argument is that a worthy rhetoric—one aimed at the highest good—will be, not a way of fooling people in law courts, but an approach to knowledge, or an embodiment of it—a kind of inspired philosophy."⁷

The integral function of language and metaphor finds its highest expression in the critical writings of Coleridge and Shelley. The poet, according to Coleridge brings "the whole soul of man into activity" by the power of imagination which, "while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter."⁸ He says Wordsworth deserves praise "as far as he has evinced the turth of passion, and the dramatic propriety of those figures and metaphors in the original poets, which, stripped of their justifying reasons, and converted into mere artifices of connection or ornament, constitute the characteristic falsity in the poetic style of the moderns."⁹ Given the "esemplastic" power of imagination, metaphor occupies a crucial place in the creative process. For Shelley poetry is "the expression of the imagination" and it is "connate with the origin of man."¹⁰

Taking a Platonic line, Shelley argues that poetry affords the highest pleasure, that the cause of this pleasure is the beautiful and that poets, when they write, exercise "the faculty of approximation to the beautiful." The language of poets "is vitally metaphorical; that is, it marks the before unapprehended relations of things and perpetuates their apprehension, until words, which represent them become, through time, signs for portions or classes of thoughts instead of pictures of integral thoughts; and then, if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganized, language will be dead to all the nobler purposes of human intercourse."¹¹ Thus, in one inspired passage, Shelley has described the creation and function of metaphor and its integral place in linguistic expression.

Leaving aside the deeper philosophical aspects, we can draw certain important conclusions from the Romantic view of metaphor. Metaphor is not external to thought : instead of being ornamental, it has a corresponding meaning peculiar to it. Metaphor perceives or creates unity between disparate objects and is therefore the chief instrument of the imagination.

Hawkes has pointed out that the modern approaches to the subject in the fields of literary criticism, linguistics and anthropology have "maintained and reinforced the essentials of the Coleridgean or Romantic revolution."¹² The most outstanding modern discussion of metaphor is to be found in I.A. Richards's *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Richards analyzes a metaphor into two elements, 'tenor' and 'vehicle' : tenor is the underlying literal meaning and vehicle, the image conveyed by the word actually used. What is noteworthy in Richards's theory is his assertion that the meaning of the metaphor arises not from a simple juxtaposition of tenor and vehicle, or that of either of them, but from an "interaction" of the two. The metaphor represents a new reality resulting from a merger of the two contexts.¹³

Leech has tried to make Richards's formula more explicit and systematic in his *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*.¹⁴ He has proposed a method of analysis in three stages. It is to be noted that his method is not intended to help the reader discover the meaning of a metaphor : "our task is to analyse and to explain what we understand".

In the first stage the tenor and vehicle are written in two separate lines; in the second, the two terms are completed by "postulating semantic elements to fill in the gaps of the literal and figurative interpretations; in the final stage the ground of the metaphor is stated by asking the question : "What similarity can be discerned between the top and bottom lines of the analysis ?"

Another noteworthy attempt to analyse metaphor is made by Christine Brooke-Rose in her *A Grammar of Metaphor*.¹⁵ She is concerned with studying the metaphorical use of different parts of speech and the syntactic structure of metaphorical expressions. She has discovered some important facts about the grammatical patterns of metaphors. The noun metaphors, for example, fall into five main categories.

The modern approaches to metaphor (including those I have not discussed here) certainly throw some fresh light on the nature and structure of metaphor. But they cannot claim to have made a real breakthrough in the study of metaphor. They suffer from certain drawbacks. First, they take it for granted that a metaphor cannot be analysed otherwise than through an underlying simile; in this their view is Aristotelean. Second, they provide no help in discovering the meaning of a metaphor; if you already know it, they tell you how to make an analysis. Third, they fail to account for the impact of a metaphor. And finally, the schemes of analyses proposed by them are not quite scientific.

The most appropriate way to approach the study of metaphor is to begin with the realization that language is replete with metaphors—dead and 'living'. Most certainly all these

metaphors are not the inventions of poets. The surprising extent to which we use metaphors, suggests that metaphor is a central device of language as a process; it is a part of the human linguistic ability to deal with new experience, to give a name to it.

This can be proved in several ways. First, small children when faced with a new experience often resort to what an adult would regard as metaphors. A child may find a picture 'good', 'pretty' or 'happy'.¹⁶ Second, in the above respect, child is the father of man. Confronted with new reality or new personal awareness, men have always resorted to metaphor. "Every new experience with things prompts immediately some metaphorical expression."¹⁷ Third, it is a matter of common experience that, while struggling to express a new, complex, or unusual idea, or experience, we often find ourselves engaged in metaphor-making. On such occasions sometimes we excuse ourselves by adding such expressions as, 'so to say', 'as it were', 'as if': "my heart jumped, so to say." Fourth, poets have always used metaphors to express their new awareness. It is on the strength of these grounds that I have called metaphor a linguistic device rather than a rhetorical figure.

The primitive man's chief means to cope with new or newly-identified experience was, in all probability, transfer of meaning-components from animate to inanimate and vice versa. Words for human limbs, *head*, *eye*, *hand* came to be applied to parts of weapons, tools and equipment. Most probably, the words *fall* and *sink* in oldest English indicated inanimate motions of certain types: later on these words were used to designate similar animate and human activities.

Before I proceed to offer a proposal for the analysis and interpretation of metaphor, some more observations are needed. The associative tendency of words has been well recognised, for example, the association of *to fly* with *birds*, and *to roar* with *lions*. It is not always granted that there is also an opposite tendency to dissociate meanings of words from their

contexts such that every time a certain word occurs, we do not have to imagine the context. We tend to isolate meanings in this way though the isolation may not be quite complete. This kind of abstraction or extraction is a necessary psycholinguistic process going on all the time in language. Thus *to fly* means "to pass or move swiftly through air" and *to roar* means "to make a loud angry sound". Without this property of language, transfer of meaning would become impossible. Or, it would involve gratuitous and cluttering "imagination". The methods of analysis so far presented by scholars insist on invoking the associations of the metaphorical words. This entails the conversion of every metaphor into a simile. Let us explain this by referring to Archibald A. Hill's interesting discussion of "semantic parallels".¹⁸ Hill takes two passages from Frost's poem "Bereft" :

Where had I heard this wind before
Change like this to a deeper roar ?

and

Leaves got up in a coil and hissed
Blindly struck at my knee and missed.

"The question was whether "roar" in the first passage involved a lion, and whether the several verbs in the second were a reference to a snake." The principles enunciated by Hill may or may not hold, but my contention is that reference to the associated words is not always necessary or desirable. Do we have to bring in *ship* when we consider the metaphor in "The countess sailed across the rooms" or simply some transferred components of the meaning of *sail*? This will become clear when we consider our model for analysis.

The model I wish to propose is based on syntactico-semantic description of words somewhat along the lines of transformational-generative linguistics. For the sake of easy reference, I shall use the examples of such description given by Frank Palmer.¹⁹ Let us state the lexical entries for two words :

thought [+N, + Abstract,—Animate]

frighten [+ V, +—Np, + [+Abstract]

Aux—Det [+ Animate]]

Now let us make a metaphorical expression :

The noise frightened the thought.

Clearly, there is a contradiction in terms of features : “frighten” is marked [—Det [+Animate]] and “thought” is marked [—Animate]. The metaphorical force revolves on the resolution of this conflict. I suggest that the metaphor results from the projection of animateness on to “thought”. The semantic transformation leads us to conceive of “thought” as a creature.

Next we will analyse a well-known metaphor, “ray of hope”

ray	of	hope
+Count		—Count
+Concrete		—Concrete
—Animate		—Animate

We find that the last feature is common to both the words; so there is no question of transfer or projection of meaning. A [+Count] and [—Count] combination is allowed by English in such a structure and therefore there is no conflict or contradiction. The middle features in the two columns are, however, directly contradictory. We can therefore conclude that concreteness in this case is attributed to “hope”. We are forced to think of hope as a concrete object. We feel the metaphor has not yet yielded its main import. We continue with semantic analysis thus :

ray	of hope
+light	—
+linearity	—

Since both light and linearity, or more appropriately linear motion, are properties of a concrete object, we cannot hope

to find them in the other column. When we transfer these features to "hope" the metaphor reveals its full meaning.

We are now in a position to take up true poetic metaphors for analysis and interpretation. It will have been noticed that I have already taken some liberties with the strict transformational-generative model. I must add that in our analysis of metaphors we often have to explore the semantic features to a depth seldom reached by any grammatical or semantic theory, although the guidelines are extremely helpful to a systematic approach.

The metaphors I wish to consider occur in the first two lines of Tony Connor's poem "An Evening at Home" :

Sensing a poem about to happen.
two letters demanded to be written.

We will first tabulate the semantic features of the three verbs, *sense*, *happen* and *demand* for the subject noun :

S	<i>sense</i>	S	<i>happen</i>	S	<i>demand</i>
+animate		—animate		+animate	
+feeling		—subjective		+human	
—deliberation		+temporal		+authority	

The noun subject of *sense* and *demand* is *two letters*. *Letter* has the following features :

letter

+Concrete

—Animate

We can now see how the poetic meaning of *letters* as organisms capable of feeling and imposing their authority is created by the use of *sense* and *demand* metaphorically. Similarly the use of *happen* with *poem* also effects semantic transformation. The attribution of new features to *poem* infuses it with a new meaning in the poem. We have to conceive of

it as an event which takes place in spite of oneself : we have to class it with earthquakes, revolutions, and natural changes.

Let us be more explicit about the procedure to be followed in the course of reading a metaphorical passage. We take the following lines from Shakespeare :

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past

Metaphorical possibilities appear at the point or over a structural unit, where literal interpretation fails to satisfy. This happens above in *the sessions of.....thought*. We examine the relevant lexical and syntactic features of *sessions* and *thought*.

(1) <i>sessions</i>	of (2)	(3) <i>thought</i>
+N	+N	+N
—concrete	+animate	+common
—animate	+human	—concrete
+legal	+legal	—animate
	+authority	—human
		—legal
		—authority

By comparing (2) and (3) above, we recognise the discrepancies between them, and our metaphorical competence poetically transfers animacy, “humanity” and legal authority to *Thought*. We are thus in a position to interpret *thought* as the mind’s power of reflection, which can compel past experiences. The valency of *sessions* also extends laterally to the mood or moment of reflection which acquires the feature + legal by transfer and also, perhaps, the idea of periodic occurrence. In order to win the full richness of experience encoded in the lines quoted above, this analysis has to be extended to the other metaphors also : *sweet silent thought* and *summon up remembrance*. It should be noted here that what I have called lateral transfer adds to the meaning of the tenor as defined by Richards, but transfer in this direction does not always occur and we needn’t insist on positing

one. What is the tenor, for example in "*Sensing* a poem about to happen."

The analytical framework presented above is not complete in details and has not been fully worked out. But I think it has certain clear advantages over those I have mentioned. First, it does not approach metaphor via simile. We can explain the meaning of the metaphor in "the countess sailed across the room" without bringing in *a ship* and *the ocean* (which is so ridiculous) by simply considering the abstracted semantic features of *to sail*. Second, it accounts systematically for the syntactico-semantic transformations involved in metaphor. Third, it leads us to the discovery and experience of a metaphor (which is so important in poetry) instead of providing a dry rational explanation.

NOTES

1. It will be clear in the course of this paper why I call metaphor a linguistic device. Traditionally, figurative language is divided into two broad classes : figures of thought, and figures of speech. Corresponding to these, we have " tropes " and " schemes ". Being concerned with the transfer of meaning, metaphor is a trope. The distinction between the two classes is not always clear.

See M. H. Ahrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 3rd, ed. Delhi : MacMillan, Indian rpt. 1978, pp. 60-63.

Geeffrey N. Leech, *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, London : Longman, 1969, p. 74.

2. Aristotle, *On the Art of Poetry*, tr. Ingram Bywater, London, O. U. P., 1920, Ch. 21.

3. Ibid.

4. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, tr. W. Rhys Roberts, London, O.U.P. 1924.

5. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, tr. H. E. Butler, London ; Loeb Classical Library, 1920-22.

6. Terence Hawkes, *Metaphor*, London, Methuen, 1972, p. 35.

7. William K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Cleanth Brooks, *Literary Criticism : A Short History*, (1957), Delhi, Oxford and IBH, Indian rpt., p. 59.

8. S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Ch. XIV, in D. J. Enright and Ernest D. Chickera, eds., *English Critical Texts*, London, O. U. P., 1972, p. 196.

9. Ibid, p. 197.

10. P. B. Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry* in Enright and Chickera, p. 225.

11. Ibid, p. 227.

12. Terence Hawkes, *Metaphor*, p. 57.

13. I. A. Richards, **The Philosophy of Rhetoric**, London : O. U. P., 1936.
14. Geoffrey N. Leech, **A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry**, London : Longman, 1969, pp 153-161.
15. Christine Brook-Rose, **A Grammar of Metaphor**, London , Secker and Warburg, 1958.
16. The phenomenon has been interpreted in a different way, but what I have said about it is not implausible. See Hans Hörmann, **Psycholinguistics**, tr. H. H. Stern, New York : Springer-Verlag, 1971, p. 282.
17. Hans Hörmann, **Psycholinguistics**, p. 226.
18. Archibald A. Hill "Principles Governing Semantic Parallels" in H. B. Allen, ed., **Readings in Applied English Linguistics**, second ed. New Delhi : Amerind, Indian, rpt. 1976, pp. 506-14.
19. Frank Palmer; **Grammar**, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972, pp. 82-84.

APPENDIX-II

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS*

Analysis and interpretation of a poem can no longer be treated in vacuo on an ad hoc basis, or as a matter of personal insight and understanding alone. The task is best attempted within a theoretical framework. From theoretical framework I mean a conceptual base as regards the nature, function and structure of poetry in general and a poem in particular. "Perception" observes Walter A. Davis "is never unmediated". According to him even the minute observations we make are theory-bound and "the problem is not to cleanse oneself of concepts but to discover one's concepts—and then to enquire as deeply as one can into their grounds".¹ Further, there is no incompatibility between theory and practice : our analysis and interpretation are governed by theory; they receive direction from it as well as a scientific status with the possibility of objective verification as far as possible in empirical studies.

My aim in this paper is to propose a practically oriented model for analysis and interpretation of a poem, which offers certain pedagogical advantages. It involves linguistic analysis of a certain kind and is intended for advanced classes. Now, literary scholarship is generally opposed to this kind of study : it is assumed that in taking a poem to pieces we destroy its beauty or aesthetic effect. This, I believe, is unfair, analysis for its own sake may not yield much, but it is not inimical to literary experience by its very nature : on the contrary, if used

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as a means, analysis can lead to a deeper and surer understanding of poems. Stylisticians have argued that certain intuitive labels such as the "grand style" of Milton, often employed by the literary critic, can be given specific formulation on the basis of linguistic analysis. Where analysis is made as a preliminary to interpretation and presentation before an audience, there need be no objection to it at all. Introducing her book on the study of poetry (not linguistic, strictly speaking) Marjorie Boulton has pointed out that "the only sound reason for examining poetry technically is that this adds to our enjoyment."²

Let us now turn to the second aspect, namely, teaching. What do we mean by teaching poetry? Does it mean imparting knowledge about poetry as such, or discussing all the poems written in English? I would say, neither. The first task is vaguely philosophical and the second well-nigh impossible. Our aim in teaching poetry is to train the student in the art or science of recovering the message encoded by the poet. "In other words, our primary duty is not so much the teaching of knowledge about literature as the imparting of skill in the recognition and comprehension of literary modes of meaning"³ The message itself is a highly complex experience: it is not a simple unit of information, or affective state. The traditional method of teaching, which consists largely of background discussion and historical scholarship—that is, talking round and round the poem—fails to arouse the student to a proper response. Commenting on historical sense, I. A. Richards has observed: "Its prime aim is just to help us to read better. But somehow all this wealth of scholarly aid does not lift up our hearts as it should."⁴

This lifting up of our hearts—a literary way of referring to the experience of a poem or a piece of literature particularly requires motivation. Motivation represents an assortment of forces which impel and encourage the learner to pursue the goal. Motivation "not only instigates behaviour but also

operates to reinforce ongoing behaviour.”⁵ Curiosity, challenge the desire for competence and longing for discovery are among intrinsic motives which do not depend on outside reinforcement to the activity they support. Reward lies in the successful achievement of the goal or even in the activity itself. Reading of poetry is an ideal activity for this kind of motivation and if the teacher fails to elicit more than a few yawns and general drowsiness, there must be something seriously wrong with the guiding-tenets and preparatory materials of poetry teaching. There are grounds to believe that a linguistically oriented analytical approach can ensure the kind of motivation I have been discussing. These grounds will become clearer as we proceed. Another advantage of such an approach is the possibility of transfer of learning. The student can make a gratifying use of his knowledge of grammar and linguistics (where it is taught as a subject) in the poetry class. It will also encourage student-participation since the learner is expected to analyse the form and discover the poetic meaning and effect of linguistic structures.

The first problem to be tackled in any approach to poetry is its nature and function. From Aristotle down to I. A. Richards, scholars have proposed all kinds of theories and yet the subject is as controversial as ever. For any workable model, it is absolutely necessary to take a modest and sensible view of the matter. Without losing ourselves into philosophical depths, we can agree that poetry affords us a certain kind of satisfaction and that proper enjoyment of poetry is a mark of being civilised. Reading or hearing of a poem creates in us a certain kind of mood with a remarkable mixture of thought and emotion. This mood may be of sadness or gaiety, elation, frustration or excitement, a profound awareness of loss or beauty. The important thing to be realised, as we shall see later, is that whatever the mood, it is definable in terms of the language used rather than some *a priori* principles. “Poetry” says Michael Roberts, “may be intended to amuse, or to ridicule, or to persuade, or to produce an effect which we feel.

to be more valuable than amusement and different from instruction; but primarily poetry is an exploration of the possibilities of language.”⁶ If our aim is to consider the language of poetry “it is prudent to begin with what is ‘there’ in the poem—‘there’ in the sense that it can be described and referred to as unarguably given by the words.”⁷ The pendulum has swung to the other extreme. Some enthusiastic ELT experts have pleaded for cutting out the introductory remarks altogether, not to talk of the poet’s biography, literary background, historical setting, etc. After presenting a sample lesson, Bright and McGregor add the following remarks :

In the lesson we have just watched we note the absence of introduction. It began with the reading of a poem not with a statement of who wrote it and certainly not with a mine of information about why, where and when he wrote it and how it relates to the rest of his work. If all this is not in the poem then it does not matter at this stage of literary education, nor, we suspect, at many other stages.⁸

I cannot help thinking that this is a naive view based on an imperfect understanding of linguistic theory. A piece of language always has meaning in the light of its “context of situation” and in normal intercourse where language is used, we do have a prior knowledge of participants and properties. If a poem, as a piece of language, has a message, then we must gather some idea of the relevant factors of the situation. This, by no means, will give a free rein to the teacher’s irrelevant and distorting disquisitions which hinder the proper enjoyment of a poem. The concept of context of situation offers a necessary scientific basis for the selection of introductory material. There are cogent reasons, in my view, to hold that the reading and discussion of a poem should be preceded by a careful presentation of the context. In this connection, I find the remarks of Robert Lado most sensible. Discussing the teaching of Carl Sandburg’s poem “Chicago” he says :

The students should find out before they read the poem that Carl Sandburg was born in Illinois, so that Chicago is not only his city as an American but as a son of its state. He worked as a laborer, porter dishwasher, newspaperman, and editor there. He loves it as it is.

The student should know something about Chicago as a transportation centre. He further adds :

How much to explain will depend on the students and the time available. Too much explanation will kill the students' interest in the poem.⁹

I would, however, hesitate to subscribe to the last remarks above and say that what determines the amount of background information to be given is the requirement of the context without which the poem will fail to render its full meaning. Sometimes there are things in a poem which no amount of linguistic analysis can clarify, e.g. *Comus*, ancestry in Milton's masque of that name.¹⁰

Some linguists hold that a work of literature provides its own framework of events and "whatever the role attempted or achieved by literature in society as language it is self-sufficient and self-contextualizing".¹¹ This, again, is a simplistic view, undermining the status of literature as communication. It would be, perhaps, nearer the truth to say that literature has a double-context — internal and external. Where the poet speaks in his own person (this is by no means always easy to decide) without a 'persona' or narrator-role, the two contexts will coincide. For example in "*La Belle Dame Sans Merci*." by John Keats the two contexts ought to be considered separately; in his sonnet, "*Bright Star : Would I were steadfast as thou art—*" they overlap. It is important to note here that whereas the external context provides the framework to the message, the internal context forms part of it and must be interpreted accordingly.

Next, we must consider the dynamic nature of poetic experience. A poem takes place in time as an event before it

enters the timeless world of aesthetic values. In this respect it differs from a painting or a statue, the whole of which you can see at a glance. Apart from the fact that the material of poetry is language itself, it has a continuously growing pattern. In a diagrammatic representation of the events which take place in reading a poem, we have to depict the eye as reading a succession of printed words giving rise to a stream of reaction.¹² Discussing the nature of the poet's creative effort C. Day Lewis says :

If he has to work in this hand-to-mouth way, it is because a poem is an organic growth in which the theme only reveals itself through the growing pattern."¹³

Here is a warning for the linguists interested in the analysis of literature. If you compute the ratios and proportions of linguistic features in a poem, you may offer clues to the total effect, for example, nominality or verballity, which may be correlated with static and dynamic nature of the experience respectively; but you are ignoring a more vital complementary task, namely, the dynamic distribution of linguistic features, and it is the latter which accounts for the experience of a poem as it is read. Let me make this clear by examining a concrete example.

In making a linguistic analysis of "Leda and the Swan" by W. B. Yeats, Halliday discovers a preponderance of nominal groups in the poem.¹⁴ This is an important finding which certainly accounts for a certain kind of impact. But we cannot stop at that. We must examine how the nominal groups occur relative to the verbs from line to line and watch constantly the level of low verballity rise and fall and rise again. The poem opens with a nominal group (a highly condensed verbless clause), then a weak verbal element is introduced by using participial forms which maintains its level until a finite verb is met with in the last verse of stanza 1. The point, I have tried to make, is, I think, sufficiently clear and I need not discuss the whole poem.

Rather, I would now like to approach the crux of the

problem : the dynamic structure of a poem. Making due allowance for the context of situation, our real experience of the poem begins with the title. (If there isn't any, which is rare, with the first sentence.) The semantic and grammatical composition of the title must be carefully studied. The student must explore all the meanings of the title and all types of meaning : referential, affective, stylistic etc. Except for internal poetic treatment as in "Love's Alchemy" or "The Loveliness of Love", the title must be discussed from the common point of view, the meanings as given in the dictionary. There is however one additional general point. As soon as we know that a word or phrase is the title of a poem, i.e., it belongs to the poetic register, we must be prepared for the possibility of new turns in its meaning and significance. Figuratively speaking, the title represents the semantic chunk, like the potter's clay or the sculptor's block, out of which the poet is going to form an aesthetic utterance by using addition, subtraction, generalisation, specialisation, enrichment, condensation, expansion or inflation etc.

The title, therefore, is of prime importance. Marjorie Boulton has demonstrated this by a small experiment. She quotes George Herbert's poem "Redemption" without the title. The result is that several expressions in the poem become puzzling, absurd or nonsensical. Once the title is revealed, the poem regains its coherence and beauty.¹⁵ I. A. Richards also insists on paying full attention to the title saying that the title has "a great deal to do with the poem."¹⁶

The first sentence of the poem follows the title : it is the second part of the poem. It presents some kind of proposition, though not in a strict logical sense. The first sentence has to be taken as a unit by virtue of its unique position. It initiates the poetic discourse and is an important pointer to the direction the poem may take. Unlike the title it is closely linked with the rest of the poem and is like the headword in a group to be modified by what follows. It may or may not be tied to the title by linguistic cohesion.

What remains is the third part irrespective of stanza divisions, although the latter are not without significance as regards the structure of the poem. At this point I must hark back to the dynamic nature of the poem. The third part progressively modifies the first proposition and ought to be watched at every turn. The final picture crystallises as a result of the linguistic manipulations employed by the poet, but, as suggested earlier, the continuously changing stimulation by linguistic means is responsible for our experience of the poem.

Two things ought to be noted. My discussion of the dynamic structure of the poem has so far remained theoretical. This is so because I have reserved its application for the last section of the paper in which I attempt an interpretation of Ted Hughes' poem "Snowdrop" on the basis of a linguistic analysis which is to follow. Secondly, the model applies to short poem of the type generally included in anthologies and course-books.

Some explanatory remarks ought to be prefaced to the analysis. I have attempted a line-by-line detailed analysis followed by what I call linguistic pictures of the poem. I admit that all the details given may not be relevant, but in a model aiming at a degree of comprehensiveness, they cannot be excluded. For grammatical analysis, I have made use of *A Grammar of Contemporary English* by R. Quirk, S. Greenbaum, G. Leech and J. Svartvik up to a certain extent. The book has a great merit for stylistic analysis since it has covered semantic aspects of English grammar. As will be clear, I have also depended on other works as well as my own insight. Ideally, I assume that both general/specific and abstract/concrete distinctions can be extended to nearly all word-classes, although I have not done so in my analysis. I have split 'concrete' into two and have also given weight to psychological intensity in marking words as 'concrete', in addition to physical reality.

The abbreviations used in the analysis, I hope, will not present any difficulty to those familiar with traditional and modern English grammar and with common semantic categories.

(II)

Snowdrop

Now is the globe shrunk tight
 Round the mouse's dulled wintering heart,
 Weasel and crow, as if moulded in brass,
 Move through an outer darkness
 Not in their right minds,
 With the other deaths, She, too, pursues her ends,
 Brutal as the stars of this month,
 Her pale head heavy as metal.

Ted Hughes

Analysis

-
 -
 -
 -
 -
 N
 Co
 sing.
 mf + mf
 Snowdrop
 C
 Con
 f
 gen
 Conc 1
 nature (flowers).

Non-normal Declarative Simple		S		V		A	
Noun phrase mh		Verb phrase		Adj		Adj	
A	Adv	S	N	V	A	A	
Adv	adjunct	art	Com	passive	stat	gradable	
	time	def	Co	dyn-process	inherent	(adjunct)	
	point	hom	sing	intr	(manner)	mf	
mf	Now	mf	mf	mf	tight	c	
c	Den	the	globe	shrunk	c	Con	
Den	n	s	c	c	unf	unf	
Sp	Conc 2	—	Den	Con	Sp	Sp	
		—	n	unf	Conc 1	Conc 2	
		—	Sp (U)	Sp	nature		

		Noun		Phrase		A	
prep	(m)	m	m	m	h		
prep	art	N		v			
stat	def	Com		dyn. process			
	hom	Co		intr			
mf	mf	mf	mb	mf	mb	Progr	
		inf	inf	inf	mb	progr	
		geni		P.P.			
Round	the	mouse's		dulled		wintering	heart
s	s	c		c		c	c
—	—	Den		Con		Con	Con
		n		unf		unf	f
		Sp (Gen)		Sp		Sp	Sp
		Conc 1		Conc 2		Conc 2	Conc 1
		animal		environmental		environmental	body-
		kingdom		impact		impact	parts

S		Noun phrase h+h		Elliptical clause Subordinator		Manner Participial		Phrase	
N	Conj	N	Com	Subordinator	Subordinator	v	dyn	process - tr	stat
mf	mf	mf	mf	mf	mf	mb	inf	mb	mf
Weasel c	and s	Crow, c	as s	if s	moulded c	P.P.		in s	brass, c
Den	—	Den	—	—	Den	Den	n	—	Den
Gen	—	Gen	—	—	Sp	Sp	n	—	Sp
Conc 1	—	Conc 1	—	—	Conc 2	Conc 1	n	—	Conc 1
animal kingdom		bird family		—	manufac- turing	metals			metals

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V	A	of Place	Noun Phrase	N	Com
v	prep	m m h	stat	m	m
v	prep	art	stat	non-g	non-inherent
dyn	dyn	indef	mf	mf	mf
transi-	passage		mf	mf	der
tional			outer	darkness	
event			c	Conc	unf
intr			Den	Gen	Conc 2
mf	mf	an	n	natural	phenomena
Move	through	s	Sp	Conc 2	relative
c	s	—	—	spatial	position
Den	—	—	—	—	—
n	—	—	—	—	—
Gen	—	—	—	—	—
Conc 2	—	—	—	—	—
motion	—	—	—	—	—

(140)

A			
(Adv. Clause. Manner. Elliptical)			
Adv.	prep	Noun	Phrase
			m m h
Adv	prep	Adj	Adj
neg	stat	poss	stat
	position	pron	non-g
	metaphorical		inherent
mf	mf	mf	mf
			mb
			infl
			pl
Not	in	their	minds,
c	s	c	c
Den	—	Den	Den
n	—	n	n
—	—	—	Sp
—	—	—	Conc 2
			body part
			metaphorical
			Ab

(141)

Normal
Declarative
Complex

A

Circumstance

prep	art	Adj	N	Adv	Pron	Adj	N
prep	def	ordinal	Com	adjunct	III Per	poss	
dyn	cat	stat	Co	focuss-	fem	pron	Com
accom-		non-g		ing			Co
paniment		inherent		additive			
				event			
				mono			
				trans			
mf	mf	mf	mf	mf	mf	mf	mf
			mb				mb
			inf				inf
			pl				pl
with	the	other	deaths.	too,	She,	her	ends
s	s	c	c	c	c	c	c
-	-	Den	Con	Den	Den	Den	den
		n	unf	n	n	n	n
		-	Sp	-	-	-	Sp
		-	Conc I	-	-	-	Conc 2
		-	calamity	-	-	-	body
		-		-	-	-	part
		-		-	-	-	business
		-		-	-	-	of life

(Adjective Clause. Elliptical)

	Conj	Noun		Phrase	
		m h	m h q	m h	
Adj		art	prep	Adj	N
Adj	Conj	def	prep	dem	Com
dyn	compa-	Cata	-	genitive	Co
grad	rison				
inher					
mf	mf	mf	mb	mf	mf
			infl		
			pl		
Brutal	as	the	stars	this	mouth,
c	s	s	c	c	c
Con	-	-	Den	Den	Den
unf			n	n	n
Sp	-	-	Sp	-	Sp
Conc 1	-	-	Conc 1	-	Conc 1
disposi-	-	-	nature	-	nature
tion					

A		(Adv. Clause. Manner. Elliptical)	
Noun Phrase			
m m h q			
Adj	h	Conj	N
Adj	N	Conj	N
	Com		Com
	Co		m
colour	mf	Comparison	mf
mf	head	mf	metal
pale	c	as	c
c	Den	s	Den
Con	n	-	n
unf	Sp	-	Gen
Sp	Conc 1	-	Conc 1
Conc 2	body	-	geological
Colour	part	-	material
abnormal			
in	poss		
Adj	pron		
mf	Her		
c	Den		
Den	n		
-	-		
-	-		
-	-		

Linguistic Pictures

1. Sentence Picture

- I Simple, Complex, Complex
 II Declarative. Declarative. Declarative
 III A (V) S V A
 A
 S, A,
 V A
 A
 A, S, A, V O_d
 O_d
 A

2. Clauses

Now is the globe shrunk tight

Round the mouse's dulled wintering heart. main clause

Weasel and crow move through an outer main clause
 darkness with the other deaths

as if moulded in brass

dependent

adv. clause

(Elliptical)

Not in their right minds

dependent adv. clause

(Elliptical)

She, too, pursues her ends

main clause

Brutal as the stars of this month

dependent adj. clause

(Elliptical)

Her pale head heavy as metal

dependent adv. clause

(Elliptical)

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3. Word Classes

Nouns	:	15
(including pronouns)		
Verbs :		
finite	:	5 (including 1 aux)
non-finite	:	2
(including participial adjectives)		
Adjectives	:	11 (including 3 posses- sives and 1 ordinal)
Adverbs	:	3 (including 'not')
Articles	:	5
Prepositions	:	6
Conjunctions	:	5
Total	:	52

4. Noun Phrases

I the globe	mh
the mouse's dulled wintering heart	m m m m h
weasel and crow	h + h
an outer darkness	m m h
their right minds	m m h
the other deaths	m m h
her ends	mh
the stars	mh (q)
this month	mh
her pale head	mmh

(The q where it has an ambiguous status has been left out)

II. Single Nouns

brass

metal

5. Semantic Picture**I. Content and structure words**

c s s c c c

s s c c c c

c s c, s s c s c,

c s s c c

c s c c c,

s s c c. c, c, c c c,

c s s c s c c

c c c c s c

c = 35

s = 17

Total = 52

II. Content words

(a)

Denotative

Connotative

favourable

1

1

unfavourable

9

neutral

24

Interpretation

Where the contemporary verse is concerned, we don't have to say much on the external context. The student is familiar with the world of today and shares with the poet the common concerns of humanity: he is liable to the same fears and hopes. The foreign student, however, is in need of specific information. Ted Hughes is a contemporary British poet. He was born in 1930. For brief periods he worked as a gardener and a nightwatchman. His poetry began appearing in the late 50's. He is greatly impressed by the vigour, ruthless dynamism and perseverance displayed by nature and animals.

The title refers to a plant which begins to show flowers while snow still lies on the ground and the rigours of winter are not yet over. It is better if the students carefully observe the plant or, at least, see a picture of it. It arouses a pleasant feeling with a tinge of hope. It should be noted that the title is all content—not a single empty element is added by way of inflexion. We have to contemplate a single plant: a generic item is viewed in its unique aspect like a proper noun. It is interesting to compare this title with "The Snowdrop" by Walter De la Mare and Wordsworth's "The Daffodils." It is a concrete word referring to an object comprehensible through the senses. Structurally however, the word consists of two free morphemes raising at the back of our mind some associations of the winter. We are orientated to nature.

There is no direct cohesion between the title and the first sentence, which is split into two parts by verse division. The first verse seems to be a complete statement until we realise from the lack of any punctuation mark at the end that something more is to come. Let me digress here to say that we can read a poem aloud properly only after grasping its meaning. A wrong stressing, or pause or intonation may wreck the whole sentiment. "We have to pay attention to the meaning when stressing a sentence, for otherwise we may pass on our misunderstanding to everyone who hears us."¹⁷ To resume the discussion, three

things should be noticed in the first verse. With the dim awareness of cold, started up by the title, "shrunk tight" (both the words being mildly connotative unfavourable) seem to continue the strand at deeper level and "the globe" used instead of "earth" gives the idea of an enclosing sphere. Thirdly, the subject-verb inversion with its initial time adverb gives a serious turn to the thought. This structure (sometimes without inversion) is associated with a sombre mood as in

Now is the midnight of the nations

in the War-poet, Percy Mackaye's terrible poem "Christmas : 1915".

and

Now o'er the one-half world
Nature seems dead

Macbeth, Act II Sc. 1.

The second line consists of a preposition followed by a long noun phrase. "Wintering" removes the suspense as regards the thought and mood, although we still miss a direct link between the title and the first statement. I have marked "the" homophoric because it applies to "mouse" and not "heart"; this use makes us think of the whole species by visualising an individual member. Verbalilty is at a low level; all the three verbs are process verbs and their active force has been further reduced by participial use. This device is responsible for an impression of slow internal activity. One thing more : the awkward rambling noun phrase reinforces the feeling of misery. The structure of noun phrase may become quite significant in poetry both for thought and feeling.¹⁸

The second sentence is a long and complex one with meaningful ambiguities. There is no article or adjective in the compound noun phrase in verse 3; this gives it a touch of inclusiveness as in "the calamity hit man and beast". Although what follows the NP is an adverbial clause by function, by position, it looks like a q and this has a marked

effect : we must conceive of weasel and crow in their brassy aspect. The separation of the verb by verse division makes the image quite distinct. "Move" is a dynamic verb, but it generally denotes involuntary transition, or displacement of inanimate objects : this accords well with the benumbed condition of the creatures and what follows in line 5 : "Not in their right minds". The phrase following the verb in line 4 is truly adverbial. "Outer" points backward to inner darkness of the earth suggested in ll. 1-2. "Globe" which is Concrete-1 contrasts with "darkness", Concrete-2 : The earth is solid, the atmosphere is airy. The second sentence is very interesting : SAVAAA; the arrangement of sentence elements with their highly eccentric order are suggestive of the shattering effect of cold.

The grammatical sentence ends half-way through in verse 6. This and the focussing adjunct "too" throw "she" onto the foreground. The personal pronoun accompanied by a very human expression "pursues her ends" flings a momentary surprise, but soon we perceive the anaphoric reference and with a thrill of discovery realise the main drift of the poem. "She" establishes direct cohesion with the title. Our sense of poetic register as well as parallelism with "move" (which is used in a literal sense) : "Weasel and crow.....move....., "She, too, pursues....." makes us suspect that "pursues her ends" may have a double meaning; literal and metaphorical. Now a lonely snowdrop is grimly set against the devastation of winter.

Line 7 confronts us with an ambiguity. Which word does the phrase modify ? Is it an adverb or a qualifier ? In the preceding portion "ends" is plural; we also have gathered that in a literal sense it suggests the flowers of the plant. Now in line 7 "stars" is also plural, moreover, it has a parallelism with flowers. I have therefore marked the expression as adjectival. "Brutal" in this connection is best interpreted to mean "harsh".

The last verse is semantically quite interesting : it raises the question of metaphor or semantic parallel. Archibald A. Hill has made a useful practical suggestion to identify semantic parallels¹⁹, although his two general principles stand in need of some further refining. His contention that each item added increases the significance of the semantic parallel is, I think, correct. "Pale" can be used for humans as well as colours and things. But when it is followed by "head", the metaphoric use is confirmed, it is further reinforced by the use of "heavy". We should, however, note that the word "head" is specific enough to settle the question and the other two words have a supporting function. The result is that we conceive of the snowdrop as a feminine individual burdened with misery. The struggle of beauty in a harsh milieu is presented in terms of a personified individual plant and this is essential for a proper experience of the poem. It would be interesting to compare this poem with Shakespeare's sonnet, "Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea."

Once we have completed our reading, we sit back to cogitate upon the impact of the poem as a whole. First of all it comprises a cool, even statement without emotional flurry and rhetoric : there are no interrogative, exclamatory or imperative sentences and no strongly connotative words. But 9 out of 10 connotative words are unfavourable. The poem as a whole speaks of an unpleasant situation. The description is highly substantial or contentive : there are only 17 structural items out of 52, very few bound morphemes and a high degree of ellipsis. All these things define the condensed nature of the poem and account for its hard crystalline impact. As against this, we can refer to Shakespeare's lighthearted description of winter characterised by a liberal use of structural words, loose structures and repetition :

When icicles hang by the wall
 And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
 And Tom bears logs into the hall,
 And milk comes frozen home in pail;

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When blood is nipt, and ways be foul,
 Then nightly sings the staring owl
 'Tuwahoo !

Tuwhit ! tuwhoo ! A merry note
 While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.
 When all around the wind doth blow,
 And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
 And birds sit brooding in the snow,
 And Marian's nose looks red and raw;
 When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl—
 Then nightly sings the staring owl
 Tuwahoo !

Tuwhit ! tuwhoo ! A merry note !
 While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

Lastly the poem is written in a nominal style. Most of the poem is in nominal groups. There are only 4 finite and 2 non-finite verbs (excluding 1 aux), of which only one, "pursue", is truly dynamic—even this is blunted by the use of "ends". The result is that the total impact creates a feeling of a fixed scene with slow mechanical activity. We can comprehend the effect of the poem better if we compare it with another treatment of winter in terms of energetic noisy activities. The poem is "Winter the Huntsman" by Osbert Sitwell.

Through his iron glades
 Rides winter the Huntsman.
 All colour fades
 As his horn is heard sighing.
 Far through the forest
 His wild hooves crash and thunder
 Till many a mighty branch
 Is torn asunder.

I can anticipate one criticism of the procedure detailed above, namely, that it is too technical to be feasible in the classroom situation. I am not in a position to vouch for its complete success, for I have practised it only partially and in a

desultory way. But the proposal is worth a trial, I personally have reason to believe that this method of dealing with a poem will have a revolutionary effect : it has the potential to transform teaching and reading of poetry into a thrilling experience of discovery — a treasure hunt.

As to the difficulties of technical analysis, this will be progressively the job of the teacher and materials producer as we move down from advanced through intermediate to elementary stages. Moreover, we do manage to teach grammar at all levels, simplifying and adapting the material to each stage. However, the grammar involved in poetry is far more complex than in ordinary prose. Still, the modern orientation of linguistics to universal semantic and pragmatic categories will be of considerable help. Let me make this statement clear by illustration. In the case of nouns, generic, specific and proper references are universal distinctions characteristic of our cognitive mode. Without using technical terminology the teacher could bring out the relevance of these distinctions to "*Snow-drop*", by comparing this form with a *snowdrop*, the *snow drop* and *snowdrops*. The difference is in terms of grammar only and the resemblance of *snowdrop* to a proper noun accounts for the direction the poem takes.

Similarly, the phonetic impact of the first line ("Now is the globe shrunk tight") can be driven home by helping the student "feel his mouth". The vowels in *now* and *globe* produce the sensation of closure in *tight*, the closing diphthong followed by a stop produces that of shutting, and the total movement of the tongue from / n / to / t / traces a full circle. With some more effort and ingenuity on the part of the teacher the grammatical structure of the poem can also be brought within the learner's range of comprehension.

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